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A lecturer is required for teaching within the Postgraduate Diploma in Library and Information Studies course, and for supervision of Masters' and Higher Degree students.

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Salary in range £7,190-£14,125 per annum plus £1,188 per annum London Allowance.

Applications, with the names of two referees, should be sent by 12th August, 1983 to the Director, School of Library Archive and Information Studies, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT.

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Applicants should not send more than three references should be asked for or before 1st August 1983.

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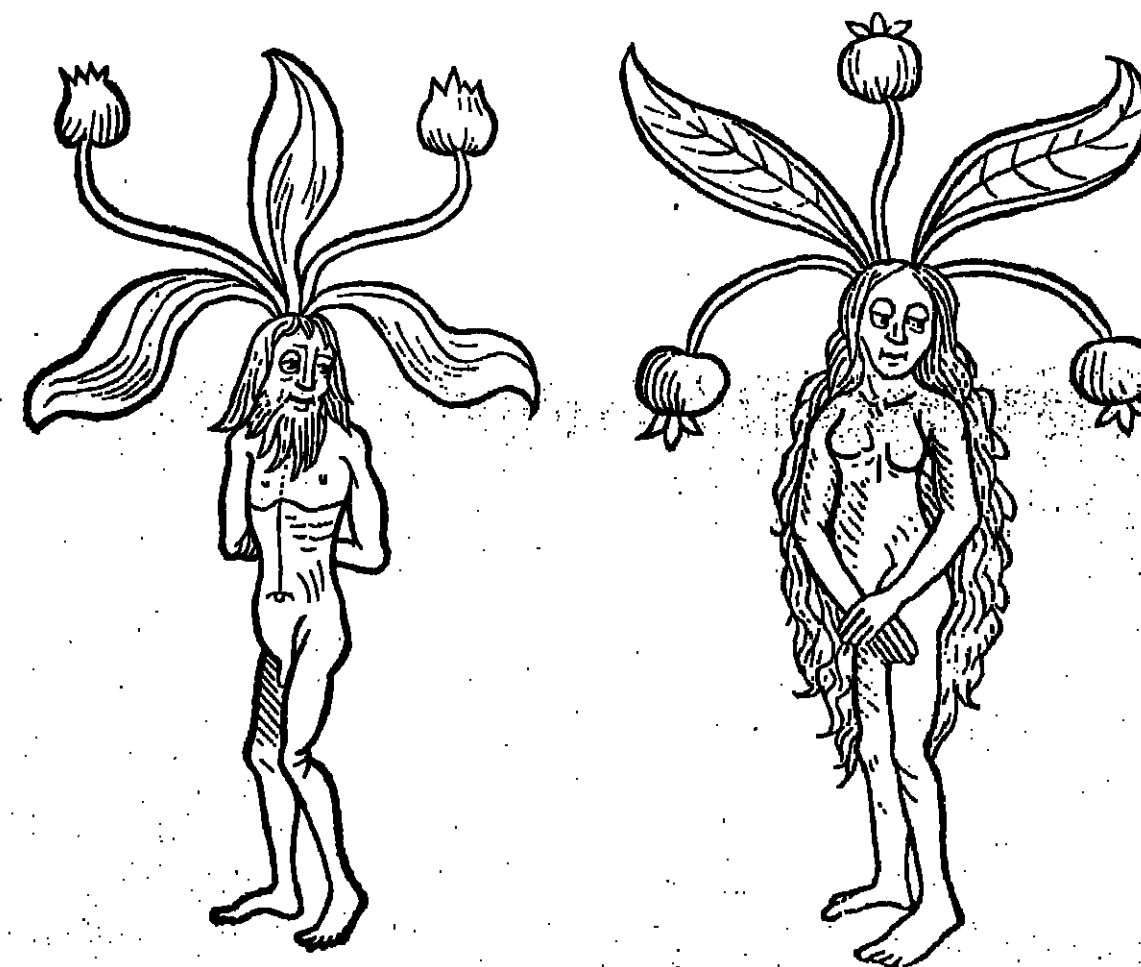
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# Master-minding the universe

Brian Pippard

PAUL DAVIES  
*God and the New Physics*  
255pp. Dent. £8.95.  
0 460 04577 6

Modern physics, it need hardly be said, is no more able than any other branch of learning to affirm or deny God's existence, and a wide range of beliefs is found among physicists. In line with what he wishes to do, Paul Davies rightly takes some pains to conceal his own belief. One may infer, however, that he is not as well read in conventional Christian doctrine or in modern theology as he is in theoretical physics: and he might have done better to stick more closely to physics since neither theology nor popular religion has much in common with the sort of arguments he deploys. He would also have done better to discipline himself to give less weight to some of the heterodoxies which float around enlivening the lives of professional cosmologists before falling into limbo. The book would have been more valuable if the space thus wasted were given to a more leisurely exposition of the rather less spectacular fundamentals. In principle the subject is of such deep importance that it should not need fireworks to attract readers. Having said this, I gladly allow that there is a wealth of interesting ideas here, hardly available elsewhere, much of which will appeal to the contemplative mind.

If a religious system seeks to describe man's place in nature and his relation to the divine, it is proper for science to make its contribution towards the description of nature. In *God and the New Physics* Professor Davies sets out to explain, with as little technical complexity as possible, what modern physics can contribute towards understanding the nature of God. For a fruitful dialogue between science and religion there must be some agreement on premises - it is useless to argue nice points of physics with an eastern sage for whom all being is illusion. Christian doctrine, however, accepts that the world was created and that in it all things living and dead exist as separate entities. That is to say, the primitive outlook of the scientist is compatible with that of the Christian. When a scientist feels certain of a fact of observation and analysis, he may expect that fact to be incorporated into the world view of all serious thinkers: in deriving a description of the physical world faith and revelation are by comparison feeble tools. In a world so riddled with pseudo-sciences it is important to recognize that physical theory has reached a point of internal consistency that justifies its being treated as a dogma. It is not a vague hunch-potch of ideas but a precise specification of the mathematical

programme to be followed in order to predict exactly what behaviour will follow the observation of a given state of affairs. This is not to say the programme is always practicable - far from it, since the mathematics may be entirely beyond the power of the largest conceivable computer. But when the problem is soluble, the prescribed procedure is utterly reliable: if experiment and theory should disagree, as they frequently do, experimenter and theorist carefully check every step of their procedures - only a crank would conclude that the basic laws were at fault. I am writing, it must be stressed, about the central

understand why for example we must never seek to know by what path an electron travelled from A to B: for if we had any information, however obtained, about its position at an intermediate point, it would affect the chance of its reaching B. This is not what happens to billiard-balls. The paradoxes of quantum mechanics have been with us since its discovery in 1926, resisting all attempts to resolve them: and it is generally accepted that no resolution will be found in terms of everyday understanding. In the days before quantum physics, when atoms were billiard-balls - obeying the eminently reasonable laws of classical

physics, it was possible to believe that this picture represented the real truth - that if God were to look down on us he would see things in the same way. We now know that whatever the truth may be, what we see is so distorted by our senses that the best we can hope to do is to describe precisely, without knowing what we describe, like a colour-blind man before a painting, only very much more so.

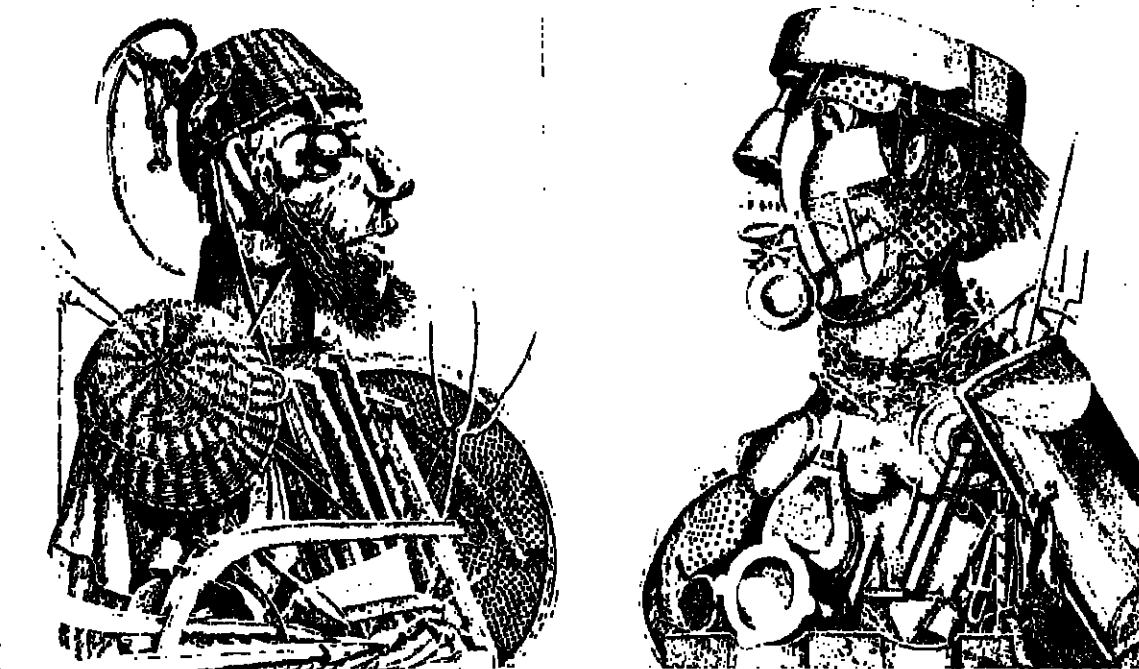
It is one peculiarity of quantum mechanics that the universe of electrically charged particles, protons and electrons, cannot admit anywhere even one magnetic pole unless its pole strength is exactly right. The unexplained discovery, in the most distant galaxy, of a wrong pole would make it impossible to formulate the basic equations of quantum mechanics, and destroy the whole theoretical structure. In fact magnetic poles are

great irritants and it is too early to say whether the single reported finding is valid; at all events, if it were claimed to have the wrong strength no one would believe it.

It may be the case that a single particle can affect everything in the universe, yet as far as local processes are concerned we remain indifferent to its possible existence. Perhaps this paradox is clarified if we consider an enormous tangled ball containing many pieces of string. Nobody looking at a small region of it would be upset to find an odd number of ends there, but it is another matter if the whole mass

All of this is very relevant to the creation of the universe. It is only very recently that astronomical observations of many types, and complex theoretical studies of how the reactions of fundamental particles came to produce the chemical elements in the proportions we know, have provided virtually unassailable evidence that the universe started with a Big Bang. A minute and inconceivably hot primitive fireball exploded with something like the velocity of light, and now, some twenty billion years later, has reached the form of the universe we know. It did not explode into the Void - itself was the only space there was. Moreover the explosion did not begin at a certain instant in time - space and time came into being at the moment the starting pistol was fired. But why was the pistol fired, and what is it that is not the universe but that from which the universe sprang? As soon as we try to speculate on such questions we are completely tongue-tied; only verbs without tenses and nouns without extension are permitted, and discourse is limited to mere ejaculation: Mind! 'Love! This may not be a satisfying theology, but at all events physics has done what it is rather good at doing; it has cleared the ground. We know that when we describe what goes on in the universe in terms of daily experience, we are at best using a dubious metaphor in the absence of a relevant language. And we know also, as wiser men than physicists have always known, that if we attempt to describe God as if he were confined within the universe, we are diminishing his glory.

This, however, is the contribution that physics has to make only to the idea of God the creator. It is quite separate from the idea of a personal God, something on which Davies is silent, doubtless because he feels this to lie beyond the competence of physics. Nevertheless a physicist should always remind himself that although there is precious little modern evidence that God ever suspends the laws of nature in order to intervene against the existence of unknown influences, subject to unknown laws, which transcend space and time as our mundane senses perceive them. But it seems these are not to be revealed by the objective procedures of science. For example, molecular biology has left little room for belief in any extraphysical vital force conferring life on otherwise dead matter. The more deeply one investigates living



"Il vero ritratto d'uno stupendo mastro da contadini" (left) and "Humani vicius instrumenta" (right), two etchings dating from the 1560s from the circle of Giuseppe Archimboldo, offered for sale by Sotheby's recently. The one on the left is apparently an earlier version of an etching used as a pair to that on the right.

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## Mighty curious

Michael Hunter

ARTHUR MACGREGOR (Editor)

Tradescent's Rarities: Essays on the  
foundations of the Ashmolean  
Museum 1683, with a catalogue of  
the surviving early collections382pp, with 186 half-tones and 75  
line drawings. Oxford University  
Press. £70.  
0 19 813405 3

Among the more remarkable possessions of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford is a series of nearly a dozen paintings of different members of the Tradescent family. Considering their moderate status, the Tradescents must be almost the best-recorded family in seventeenth-century England: these canvases, executed between about 1638 and 1645, show various delineations of John Tradescent the elder, of his son John the younger and his second wife Hester, and of the younger John's two children by his first marriage. Perhaps the most notable of the series evoke the Tradescents' chief claim to retrospective fame, as gardeners and collectors: in one, Tradescent the younger is shown dressed as a gardener with his hand on a spade, while in another he shares the foreground with a striking still-life in the form of a heap of exotic shells.

The Tradescents were first and foremost expert gardeners who catered for the aristocratic taste in horticulture in early Stuart England. Their patrons included the Cecil family at Hatfield, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and Charles I. Through their exalted contacts, the Tradescents were able to make various trips to Europe, to Russia and even to America, from which they introduced a number of new species into this country.

Their taste in collecting seems to have developed as a pendant to their gardening. Apart from the opportunities for accumulating objects provided by such trips abroad, the Tradescents' contacts with the aristocracy also proved beneficial, and particularly during the lifetime of the elder Tradescent, in the reigns of James I and Charles I, they built up a large accumulation of rarities which gained an unprecedented reputation in England.

By this time, cabinets of curiosities were commonplace in countries like Italy, and travellers abroad like John Evelyn occupied much of their time in visiting them. But in England, though there had been occasional collections of rarities since the Elizabethan period, perhaps notably that of Sir Walter Cory, the Tradescents were the first to become really celebrated. Indeed it was claimed to be the best in Europe, and the extent of its fame is revealed by the number of references to it in writings of the time. "I am almost persuaded a Man might in one day behold and collect into one place more Curiosities than hee could see if hee spent all his life in Travell", exclaimed Peter Mundy after a visit to the cabinet in 1634, and the way in which it became virtually synonymous with collecting is illustrated by the fact that the Scottish botanist, Sir Andrew Balfour, referred to his rarities as "my Tradescents". It was also regularly available to the public before and after the Civil War, and in 1656 became the subject of the first published catalogue of an English collection of rarities, a dumpy volume entitled *Museum Tradescentium: Or, A Collection of Rarities Preserved at South-Lambeth near London by John Tradescent*.

This catalogue was partly compiled by Elias Ashmole, himself a connoisseur and collector, who had become friendly with the Tradescents.

Ashmole was ultimately to become the possessor of the Tradescent collection, after a complex legal wrangle which has been the subject of much vituperation among modern commentators. It was Ashmole who presented the rarities to the University of Oxford to be housed in the purpose-built museum in Broad Street which still survives (though its function has since changed) and which was opened exactly three hundred years ago, in 1683.

*Tradescent's Rarities* celebrates this tercentenary, combining a catalogue of such objects from the original collection as still survive with a series of essays on the Tradescents, on the foundation and early years of the Museum and on the history of collecting in the period. The introductory essays form an appropriate opening to the volume, though they are a little patchy. April London has contributed an interesting analysis of the benefactors listed in *Museum Tradescentium*, while Arthur MacGregor provides an overview of comparable collections of the period which forms a welcome supplement to the fullest account of the subject yet extant, Sir David Murray's classic but now dated history of museums. The essays on the Ashmolean, on the other hand, really add little to what is already available in print, particularly in C. H. Josten's *Elias Ashmole*.

The real kernel of the book, however, is the definitive catalogue of the objects surviving from the early collections, which comprises some three-quarters of the volume, illustrated by over two hundred figures and plates. An impressive array of experts has been assembled to deal with each of the classes of object represented. They provide a painstaking account of the items involved, sometimes running to several pages for a single exhibit, as with the oldest North American Indian skin shirt known, or a runic almanac presented to the Ashmolean in 1683. Perhaps the most interesting entries

concern ethnographic objects: these comprise a set of three early artifacts from North America, and elsewhere, of historical significance. But the catalogue has been devoted to pictures, coins and medals, curiosities such as elaborate fruitstones, one of the desiderata of collectors.

The differential survival of these objects gives a somewhat skewed reflection of the original collection as it existed in the seventeenth century. Thus, the catalogue has been drawn from descriptions in *Museum Tradescentium* and in other contemporary collections made in the early Ashmolean, and on the whole, has proved easiest with objects such as ethnographic works of art. Natural history, on the other hand, even when it survived (and many have since succumbed to decay) proved more difficult among the larger collections, they have been absorbed, and relevant sections have been hence the extensive modern fauna and mineralogical works of art. Natural history, on the other hand, even when it survived (and many have since succumbed to decay) proved more difficult among the larger collections, they have been absorbed, and relevant sections have been hence the extensive modern fauna and mineralogical works of art.

Any reader prepared to be troubled, however, can draw conclusions about the collection from materials in this book, since facsimiles of *Tradescentium* and its catalogues and Benet's *Tradescentium* are included. These appear of microfiche neatly tucked into the back of the book, perhaps the ultimate in appropriate lavish production. *Tradescent's Rarities* is a memorial to the great English collectors.

## LITERATURE

## Whiffs of bohemianism

Victoria Glendinning

VIOLET POWELL

The Constant Novelist: A Study of Margaret Kennedy 1896-1967  
219pp. Heinemann. £10.95.  
0 434 59951 4

Margaret Kennedy shot to fame with her second novel *The Constant Nymph* in 1924, when she was twenty-eight. After a slow start the book had the sort of general success that is less common today, when fiction tends to be tailored for particular groups or markets. The romantic tragedy of Lewis Dodd and young Tessa was popular with mandarins and middlebrows, young and old: Moore, Housman, Hardy and Bennett praised it, and it was a cult book, briefly, for the young Cyril Connolly. There was added spice for the cognoscenti in the rumour that the rakety artistic household in the story, with its trails of wives, mistresses and illegitimate children, owed much to the life-style of Augustus John. Lewis Dodd was partly modelled on Lady Violet Powell's own brother-in-law, Henry Lamb the painter, though music, not painting, was the channel for the talents of the fictional cast of bohemians and exotically displaced persons.

Margaret Kennedy wrote fifteen other novels and "a number of plays" and film scripts, but apart from the dramatization and filming of *Nymph* itself she never really repeated her success. Lady Violet's "study" is unaccountably disappointing. Her subject - long-nosed and irredeemably unglamorous, to judge from the photographs - had an upper-middle-class background and was educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College (which she hated, and exploited as copy in her famous novel) before going up to Somerville College, Oxford. The year after *The Constant Nymph* came out she married David Davies, a Wykehamist barrister who had been secretary to Asquith; they had three children, and lived in Campden Hill Square.

Powell's material is thin, and her style of writing idiosyncratic; her commas are distributed with the abstract anarchy of cake-crums on a carpet. She fills gaps in eccentric ways - for example, with her own first impression of Margaret Kennedy's beloved Tyrol, or with mild anecdotes of a not strictly relevant kind about peripheral people. Miss Guinness, the headmistress of Cheltenham, retired in 1924 but continued to make herself felt.

To please her fastidious taste a famous tea and coffee merchant in Bath mixed a special blend of China tea. This was still supplied in the nineteen-fifties to those who, on later, listed among her intimates. She asked at her dinner parties, where the main course was generally "a small circle of ham on pineapple with a tiny sausage in the centre". She, and her biographer, relish very faintly risqué stories and very mildly naughty puns. She expressed her frustrations through ill-health; her colds are the best-documented things in this book, and as war threatened "her hairdresser exclaimed in horror at the state of her scalp" and "her dentist warned her of the deplorable state of her mouth". She had shingles, and "her mouth, which was the terrible thing that happens when the wind changes, fixing the expression in an alarming grimace. She went deaf early. These were true misfortunes; but nothing about Margaret Kennedy as described here suggests a noble heart or an interesting mind battling against such adversity.

This is delightful - but whom, one feels compelled to ask, is this book meant to be about?

The only substantial mass of first-hand documentation that the author has come up with is a two-year journal by Margaret Kennedy written just before the Second World War broke out, to cheer up a bereaved friend. Lady Violet chooses to paraphrase rather than quote this journal; and an account of domestic and professional discontents, dull dinner parties and troublesome colds is thereby deprived of whatever personal or period flavour it might have had. Nor, though Lady Violet devotes ten pages to telling the story of *The Constant Nymph*, does she quote anything from it to indicate the tone, pace and quality of the writing. Apart from the assertion that the novel represents the conflict between art and culture, one is given little notion of the novelist's intentions, or of the nature and extent of her achievement.

It may be good breeding and a natural reserve that prompted Lady Violet to be equally obscure in

biographical matters; there are anecdotes, culled from the journal, about Margaret Kennedy's disagreements with "a diplomat's wife" on "a committee to award a literary prize" - a "comic situation" may, as she says, have arisen, but it is quite meaningless since one is told neither the precise setting nor the identity of the heroine's antagonist. A similar discretion and vagueness blurs the point of many other situations and stories.

One may deduce however that Margaret Kennedy was temperamental, often bad-tempered and truculent. She was spiteful about friends who are, a couple of pages later, listed among her intimates. She asked at her dinner parties, where the main course was generally "a small circle of ham on pineapple with a tiny sausage in the centre". She, and her biographer, relish very faintly risqué stories and very mildly naughty puns. She expressed her frustrations through ill-health; her colds are the best-documented things in this book, and as war threatened "her hairdresser exclaimed in horror at the state of her scalp" and "her dentist warned her of the deplorable state of her mouth". She had shingles, and "her mouth, which was the terrible thing that happens when the wind changes, fixing the expression in an alarming grimace. She went deaf early. These were true misfortunes; but nothing about Margaret Kennedy as described here suggests a noble heart or an interesting mind battling against such adversity.

There is absolutely no reason why the author of one phenomenally popular book and several respectably successful ones should, this fact apart, be more interesting, let alone nicer, than anyone else. That perhaps is the lesson to be learned from this "study" of Margaret Kennedy. St John Ervine once wrote "in a magazine" (there are no notes and no attempts at professional precision in this book) that "any intelligent charwoman would be better company than Miss Kennedy". If this was even halfway true, the foggy and whimsical nature of this memoir was perhaps inevitable.

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## The virtuoso abroad

David Nokes

JOHN BOWLE (Editor)

The Diary of John Evelyn  
476pp. Oxford University Press.  
£19.50  
0 19 251011 8

A necessary ingredient in the appeal of many historical diaries appears to lie in the element of serendipity surrounding their survival and discovery. We are suspicious of those Cabinet diarists who consciously dramatize the minutiae of their lives for the amusement of later generations; but our belief in the authentic informality of the genre is confirmed when we are assured that the manuscript of a diary has lain neglected for years in some cobwebbed attic. In the case of Evelyn's diary, the loose sheets were being used to cut out dress patterns until rescued from this domestic indignity by a zealous antiquary in the early nineteenth century. At the time the then Lady Evelyn was convinced that the public would find little of interest in her ancestor's jottings. A century later Virginia Woolf was still asking why modern readers should trouble themselves with "the uninspired work of a good man". The answer, she concluded, was ignorance; Evelyn's "relative and the modern reader's naive charm at this earliest of all Bede-like, as Evelyn, avoiding civil life at home, travels through Europe offering observations on the art, architecture and curiosities that catch his eye. He describes the paintings in Florence, the catcombs in Rome, the gondolas in Venice, the galley-slaves at Marseilles and some macabre experiments with a dog in the bay of Naples, all with the amused detachment of a Grand Tourist. But he always finds his real delight in trees and gardens: the "delicious shade" of

the physic garden of Stour "noble palm", the precious rare fruits of the Tullianum which he declared, "a paradise".

Yet there is a lack of Evelyn's descriptions without subject with the same formality. In Paris he describes the torture of a prisoner, the decorations of the Paris Opera, both cases his language is too

visual detail with a total emotional involvement and Evelyn's prose, like his diary, is always well-informed and this diary, unlike Evelyn's, is strictly a diary at all; and the form of a memoir of events, Evelyn's descriptions of calmness of "recognition" tranquility. There is no sense of day bustle and excitement for Evelyn almost wholly in personal element from his own life, when mentioning the death of an old friend, the "generalized elegiac" and the more interest in the character of the person than in the character of the event, and although he describes a dissection of several of his friends, no anatomy of a mind. Woolf concludes that his diary is opaque rather than transparent, that he has no depths through which we can see movements of mind and secret movements of mind. Instead, we have "the observations of a gentleman" and the memoranda of a person. This new selection of the diary by John Bowle is presented and offers a representative miscellany of remarks. It should make reading for the vacationist or horticulturalist doing a grand scale.

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## Images of ordinariness

Linda Taylor

NICOLA BEAUMAN

A Very Great Profession  
273pp. Virago. £8.95.  
0 86068 304 4

In an attempt to get away from the structures of "Literature", Beauman holds that "a novel is good" because it moves the reader and feeds her imagination. It does not necessarily follow, however, that what feeds the imagination of one generation will feed that of the next; when it comes to posterity, or staying power, it is the way in which the everyday is dealt with, not the everyday itself, that transcends time. There is nothing more domestic, for example, than the details of a young lady's toilet table. But when Pope describes them in *The Rape of the Lock*, it is not for their social or historical interest that they are memorable. Nicola Beauman would dismiss the toilet table as "scene-setting rather than touching the heart of things"; she would presumably also dismiss Hardy's description of the life of a milkmaid or James's fixation with possessions in the same way. The heart of things for Beauman is "how a woman [in the 1920s or 1930s] organised her contraption" or how "Mrs. Dalloway [held] up her stockings", and though it is natural enough to be curious about vinegar sponges and corsets, when it comes to Mrs. Dalloway they don't seem the essential things.

Beauman irritably quotes Virginia Woolf's depiction of "the novelist" who concocts his books out of the froth of the moment... his work passes as the year 1921 passes... and in three years' time looks as dowdy and dull as any other fashion which has served its turn and gone its way". She might have gone on to say that though "the froth of the moment" may be dull and dowdy in three years' time, after fifty or sixty years it becomes quaint


and charming. And more than anything else it is the quaintness of the details of middle-class women's lives in the period between 1914 and 1939 that appeals to Beauman.

For its range as a piece of social documentation, however, *A Very Great Profession* has value. In her search for "the big issues" - war, fascism, psychoanalysis, love and so on - and she makes some sense of the changing expectations of her ordinary middle-class (and not so middle-class) women. She deals, in depth or in passing, with the works of more than fifty women writers of the time, from Elizabeth Bowen and Katharine Mansfield to Vera Brittain, Ethel M. Dell and Radclyffe Hall. But it is not fiction that provides Beauman with her most acute images of ordinariness: such as the prize-winning entries for a competition set in 1920, by the magazine *Our Home and Garden*, which wanted readers to send "an account of how they run, or would run, a servantless house for a middle-class family" or the dismal picture of working-class drudgery drawn by Leonora Eyles in her documentary book, *The Woman in the Little House*.

The main weakness of *A Very Great Profession* is Beauman's insistence on treating novels as social documents. Virginia Woolf, she says, "left the everyday out of her novels and confined it instead to her diaries and letters, to astonishing effect... It is literature's loss that this detail is excluded from the fiction". Which is like saying that a literary travel book is disappointing because it fails to supply a relevant time-table of trains. "The Monkeys, the Rosinunts, the Ladies and the Lauris, however prosaic their lives, are creatures of the imagination (the author's and their own): it is in their nature as heroines, that their ordinariness will be extraordinary, just as Jane Eyre's and Fanny Price's was."



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en Lane



## The pagan heritage

Robert Browning

N. G. WILSON

Scholars of Byzantium  
283pp. Duckworth. £28 (paperback, £12.50).  
0 7156 1705 2

It used often to be said that the Byzantines preserved the heritage of Greek literature and thought until the humanists of the Renaissance were ready to take over the torch from their faltering hands. Few today would put the matter in terms quite so teleological, or so patronizing. Yet it is not easy to discover what the Byzantines actually did in the course of a thousand years with the literature of ancient Greece to which they enjoyed privileged, and often exclusive, access. Did they use it as a guide to life, as a symbol of social status or national identity, as a body of educational "set books"? Did they seriously try to prevent texts becoming corrupted or lost? How did they understand and interpret the literature of a world very different from their own? These are large questions. To answer them adequately we need massive factual information and sharp conceptual clarity.

N. G. Wilson explores many aspects of these problems although he concentrates on Byzantine attitudes to

the preservation and comprehension of classical texts. As editor of the scholia on Aristophanes and a leading expert on Greek palaeography and codicology he is able to flesh out general statements about Byzantine scholarly activity with an astonishing range of detailed information, often from unpublished sources. He mentions or quotes from more than 350 medieval Greek manuscripts. For the key period AD 800-875 he surveys surviving manuscripts of classical texts and demonstrates that the predominant interest of scholars of the time was in the scientific and philosophical parts of the Hellenic heritage, which they hoped to find of practical use.

The book is mainly a study of individuals and what they did. Some of them are of little importance in themselves, but interesting as typical figures, like George Choiboskos, a teacher in Constantinople in the late eighth century who wrote grammatical works, including an elementary linguistic commentary on the Psalms, which remained in use as a textbook for centuries. Others, like the patriarch Photios, who had read and reflected on more books than any European till the Renaissance, were men who would have been giants in any society. Wilson's section on Photios is admirable, and brings out clearly how much of ancient critical concepts and methods was still available in the ninth century to those who sought them out.

That on Michael Psellos, another outstanding figure, is a little disconnected and inconclusive, and makes Psellos appear more of a windbag than he was. As there is no definitive list of his works, and as some of them are still unpublished, a degree of fuzziness is inevitable. Yet the adventurous self-confidence with which eleventh-century figures like Psellos handled the heritage of the pagan past does not emerge as clearly as it might. The treatment of Eustathios is sympathetic, if rather one-sided. Wilson argues at some length that Eustathios was not a brilliant textual critic, but says nothing of his readiness to use the world of his contemporaries to illustrate ancient literature, as shown by his interest in folklore and spoken Greek. Like other twelfth-century writers, Eustathios sometimes displays remarkable independence and originality within the constraints of a traditional framework.

In asking whether Eustathios was a good textual critic Wilson seems to be looking in the twelfth century for the prefiguration of the nineteenth-century English or German classical scholar, for whom the critical study of ancient texts is an end in itself, and also a means of earning a living. But the modern "scholar" is the product of a world of printed books and established universities, neither of which existed in Byzantine society. No Byzantine was or could be primarily a textual critic.

Those of them who concerned themselves with classical Greek literature were teachers, civil servants, or clergymen, participating in and contributing to a literary culture which defined the identity of their society and legitimized its social and political structure - including their own place in it. The culture which they perpetuated had two roots of equal importance - Hellas and Christianity. Constantinople was the New Jerusalem as well as the New Rome. Homer and the Psalms are again and again quoted side by side to make a point. When the emperor Alexios Komnenos was accused of seizing church plate to pay his army he justified himself - in a speech recorded by his daughter - by referring to the precedents of Pericles and David (Anna Komnene, *Alexiad* 6.3). Many Byzantine teachers and writers were as much concerned with Christian as with classical literature; John Xiphilinos, mentioned for his epitome of Dio Cassius, also compiled a volume of saints' lives and a corpus of homilies for liturgical use. In some ways Byzantine scholars resembled the 'ulama of pre-modern Islamic society more than they did German professors or fellows of Oxford colleges.

Wilson knows this very well and makes it clear in his studies of individuals. But every now and then he yields to a narrow and anachronistic concept of "scholarship". Himerios "has the saving grace of preserving a

few fragments of Greek lyric poetry, but Himerios was a teacher, a practitioner of rhetoric, a philosopher. The quality of his choppiness, scholarship is "to us", but as a teacher a pamphleteer he was concerned with problems of his own time. Not that there were any Byzantines who possessed a temperament and interest in classical scholar. The principles professed by Eustathios, a century commentator on Aristotle, are quoted with approval by William of Trier in the text of the *Trilogies* shown by Demetrius Traklinis in the fourteenth century. He might also have mentioned a discussion by an anonymous scholar in the tenth century of problems of editing a patristic text. But such concerns were not central to Byzantine men of learning.

In spite of this occasional straying view, N. G. Wilson's book is a very rich in information and nearly sound in judgment. It provides a magisterial overview of a field of interest to the classicist and Renaissance scholar as well as to the professional Byzantinist, and it is a pleasure to read Lemerle's *Le monde humanitaire byzantin* (1971) or Kazhdan's *La production intellectuelle à Bizance* (1983) as a direct introduction to the intellectual life of the Greek Middle Ages.

## Nationalism offshore

Douglas Johnson

ROBERT RAMSAY  
The Corsican Time-bomb  
245pp. Manchester University Press.  
£21.  
0 7190 0893 X

The French like to tell stories about Corsicans. Sometimes they are cruel stories, as when a Corsican is interviewed on television, and asked what the main crop of the island is. After some hesitation he replies that it is chestnuts. The interviewer, with professional excitement, inquires how the chestnuts are harvested. After more hesitation the Corsican replies that you wait until the wind blows them off the trees. But, says the interviewer, what if there is no wind? "Bien", replies the Corsican, "C'est une mauvaise année." More picturesque is the Giraudoux character who, when asked why so many customs men came from Corsica, replied that it was so that the frontiers of France should be perfumed with garlic.

It could be said that there is no harm in such stories. Most countries have some sub-regional butt which they use in this way. But the Corsicans are sensitive about being butts and understandably so. It is only a short step from such joviality to treating them as if they were all gangsters, smugglers, drug-pushers and pimps, and one could not visit their island without running the risk of being cheated or robbed. Some highly placed French politicians, such as Michel Poniatowski, have not hesitated to use extravagant language when talking about Corsica, and the resentments which such arrogance creates are among the many factors which have made Corsica a centre of violent protest.

Robert Ramsay, who recounts the history of the island, and traces the evolution of political violence there since the mid-1970s, ends his book with a comparison between Corsica and Northern Ireland (a comparison which many Corsicans would reject indignantly, because they are

convinced that their case is unique). He points out that, unlike Ireland, there are no religious divisions in Corsica and no outside country laying claim to its territory. There is in Ireland a double fear: that of the Protestants, who fear that they will lose their identity if Northern Ireland is merged into a United Ireland; that of the Catholics, who fear they will lose their identity and suffer civically if they are constantly governed by a Protestant majority.

In Corsica the situation should be simpler. The autonomist awakening of the 1970s can be seen as part of a general movement in which certain ethnic groups (such as the Bretons) demanded a new status in their dealings with their respective national states. But in Corsica a greater complexity has developed. It is true that the autonomists have made the Corsicans more aware of who they are in historical, ethnic and cultural terms, and made them determined to safeguard this distinctive personality. But thereafter has come confusion. There are many who want only to see Corsica treated in a different way from the rest of France, rather than a Corsica becoming separate from the rest of France. It is to these moderates that the Socialist government is at present appealing with its creation of a special statute for the island. But there are others who believe that a more dramatic change must take place and that Corsica must affirm her independence rather than her special identity.

Mr Ramsay gives particular importance to the affair of Aleria, in the summer of 1975, when a repatriate from Algeria (those who returned from Algeria often took on the worst characteristics of alien settlers) was involved in a wine scandal which threatened to ruin many Corsican merchants and wine-producers. As a symbolic protest Edmond Siméoni's nationalists occupied the fraudulent merchant's estate (near Aleria). To their astonishment a large force of Republican Guards and helicopters were unleashed against them; shots were exchanged, and two CRS men were killed. As a result, groups of Corsicans began to undertake secret

military and terrorist training; and President Giscard's sudden switch of policy, away from the hard line and towards conciliation, failed to convince.

French opinion oscillates in its view of Corsican nationalism. The news of bombs exploding, or failing to explode, is greeted with a certain amount of indifference on the mainland. The news that terrorists are organizing a "protectionist racket, or that some distinguished figure has been killed because he refused to pay protection money, is greeted with indignation. Indignation is usually followed by a shake-up in the Corsican police; new specialists are appointed, and certain nationalist organizations banned.

Ramsay provides a useful introduction to this sad story. Perhaps he doesn't adequately explain how the clan system still works in Corsica and how it affects the organization of terrorist activity, but he shows how life there is now dominated by the nationalist question and the tortuous ways in which it is evolving. When there are as many as sixty bombing incidents in two nights, the French police congratulate themselves and say that things are getting better. When the newly constituted assembly for Corsica, which contains no working majority for any party, succeeds in voting the regional budget, thanks to an unexpected and temporary agreement among the traditional parties, the *non-alignés* and two of the nationalist parties, then Siméoni says that the future of Corsica cannot be decided by the spin of a coin. But the impression is sometimes given that this is precisely how decisions are taken.

Since the recent journey to Corsica by President Mitterrand there are signs that nationalist violence is hotting up. A new, and somewhat mysterious, Armée de libération nationale has appeared; bombs have exploded in the town hall at Ajaccio; warfare between different nationalist groups has come to look like any old gang warfare; tourists have been threatened. It is difficult to believe that when Mitterrand said that he was glad to be in Corsica because he was glad to be in France, this was in any way the statement of an adequate policy.

## Capri-ccio

Peter Nichols

LUIGI FORNI

The Dove and the Bear  
Translated by Tina Mattei  
159pp. Tunbridge Wells: Midas. £6.95.  
0 85936 226 4

We should spare a thought for the girls who work for the KGB: they have even more to contend with, it seems, than imperialist agents. Poor Natasha Raskolnina, for example, who dedicated her brains and a range of physical assets ("Swelling and provocative breasts distracted masculine admiration from her muscular thighs") to her work with the Rome bureau. When she suddenly found that she had to contend with the then head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, whom she had admired at a distance but never expected to accompany on a trip around Rome at night, she must have known that there would be trouble. "You are", he told her, over a late brandy, "one of the most valuable assets of the Rome bureau", and we can only guess what happened next when a chapter in *The Dove and the Bear* ends with Natasha returning to the embassy with the Chief, "preparing herself for a long night". Eventually she had the good taste to defect.

Ursula Riesman meanwhile, the Capri resident of the KGB, whose services dated back to the times of Stalin and Beria, had two main lines of operation. She would stroll in the island's Piazzetta of an evening, meeting industrialists, politicians, scientists, trade unionists and writers from many countries, and would envelop them on their conversations while sitting, elbow to elbow, at the tables. She frequented the villas of the international aristocrats, "where one ran across such people as von Bohlen and Halvach of the Krupp dynasty, Agnelli of Fiat, Aristotle Onassis and other private ship-owners". But then came the age of the package-tour, and the island was no longer a good place for the collection of information. Poor Ursula had her activities curtailed, and Rome headquarters sent a courier down to her "only when absolutely necessary".

Fresh from Andropov's embraces, Natasha made contact with Ursula in Capri in order to carry out their part of an ambitious KGB plan: to bring about

a meeting between the Pope and Leonid Brezhnev. She was accompanied by Sergei, another agent who also liked to spend long nights with Natasha. Ursula was disgruntled and hurt that no one told her what the sensual pair were planning under her roof. Yet it was all over, she complained about their behaviour to a Bulgarian professor who gave her a drink of poisoned port. Thus the professor may have been the link between the ill-treated Ursula and the Bulgarian secret service, which paid Mehmet Ali Agca, a young Turkish terrorist, to shoot the Pope.

*The Dove and the Bear* purports to reveal a secret meeting between Pope John Paul II and Brezhnev aboard the Soviet cruiser Kirov, at which the Russian aim was to ask the Pope's help in order to calm the Poles, especially Lech Walesa and the other leaders of "Solidarity". The meeting apparently was a success. After a moment of prayer at an improvised altar which Brezhnev had thoughtfully prepared in an adjoining cabin, with oars from a lifeboat to represent a crucifix, the Pope promised to restrain Walesa.

Luigi Forni gallantly accepts the doubts that will arise in the reader's mind concerning the plausibility of his account of this meeting between the two Slav leaders. When he first heard of it, he writes that his reaction was a "mixture of scepticism and hilarity". But he hardly helps us to share his later conviction that the meeting took place. He explains that he cannot reveal the sources which provided him with the story: stating that he has altered the narrative to protect the identity of his informants, while reconstructing conversations which took place "with no witness". Of course, Natasha could help us if only we knew where she was. It would be useless to ask the author where she is; "for if he does not know, and if he did, he would never tell you". Ursula has moved on to wherever KGB residents go after being poisoned in Capri. That leaves us with the shred provided by Forni's version of the "Bulgarian Connection". The Bulgarians differed from the Russians in that they wanted the total destruction of "Solidarity" because of the bad example it set to Bulgarians. So they tried to have the Pope killed. Yet, the attempt may not have been the work of the Bulgarians; Forni adds: "the reader must draw his own conclusions according to the evidence which is only now beginning to emerge."

## For honour and for gain

John D'Arms

PETER GARNSEY, KEITH HOPKINS  
and C. R. WHITTAKER (Editors)

Trade in the Ancient Economy  
230pp. Chatto and Windus. £15.  
0 7011 6264 4

Collaborative academic ventures with Moses Finley at centre stage have been proliferating since 1979, when Finley, who has taught at Cambridge since he left the United States in 1954, paid his first visit to the American Academy in Rome; there his appearance was a high point at a year-long international symposium of historians and archaeologists on the seaborne commerce of ancient Rome. Now, from Cambridge, comes *Trade in*

the Ancient Economy, the offerings of fourteen scholars from Britain, France, Italy and Holland (the book's jacket mysteriously expands the number of countries to five); these papers had their origin in a series of Cambridge seminars, with (we are informed) Finley himself usually in attendance.

This is highly specialized fare, and readers ought not to expect to find any central thesis systematically unfolded; indeed, individual contributors for the most part ignore the arguments of their fellow seminarists and engage instead in debate with scholars who were not present. And so, when Keith Hopkins asserts in his introduction that "we thrashed out, or more often went in circles round, areas of agreement and disagreement" the "we" needs clarification: does it refer only to the editors or to all fourteen seminarists?

Yet the book is valuable. Important issues - the significance of archaeology for ancient economic history, the volume and profitability of trade, the place of trade in the development of towns, and the social status of traders - are repeatedly discussed, from varying theoretical stances and historical perspectives. The chronological range (from archaic Greece to the late Roman Empire) is as wide as that of Finley himself, much of the writing - lively and often combative - is not unworthy of him, and the bibliography provides a good synopsis of specialized work in the field.

The question of the value of archaeological discoveries for the ancient economy receives much critical attention, as is fitting: not simply because ancient artefacts bulk so large in our evidence for trading patterns, but because Finley himself has protested strongly against scholars who infer the existence of interregional, grand-scale commerce from small quantities of discovered materials. While too many field archaeologists continue to labour unaware of the implications of Finley's critique, the more historically-minded among them, as well as increasing numbers of historians, have accepted the challenge and are seeking to define more sharply the economic meaning of surviving artefacts and of their distribution.

For ancient objects, undeniably, travelled, sometimes in amazing numbers, but not all of them were objects of commercial exchange, bought and sold for gain on an organized market. "Trade" in the book's title is not merely descriptive; it has reductionist implications, which work much better for the five Greek papers than for most of the others, where "trade" comes to look more and more like "commerce". The thrust of the first part of the book is well illustrated in the paper by A. M. Snodgrass, who argues convincingly that the large numbers of heavy statues freighted in archaic Greece were not items of trade at all, but religious objects, commissioned by a few rich and powerful patrons. In a similar vein, Paul Cartledge sees archaic distribution of such artefacts as decorated pottery not as "commerce properly so called", but rather as "irregular aristocratic surplus and gift exchange": aimed at securing goods to consume.

But in the Roman world, particularly between 200 BC and AD 200, this firmly primitivist view of the ancient economy becomes much more difficult to sustain. Hopkins, in an excellent introductory section, lists the factors which contributed to economic growth: population, increased

surpluses (agricultural and non-agricultural) expanded; sophisticated harbour facilities were built or enlarged at ports throughout the Mediterranean; Roman merchant-ships commonly conveyed burdens of 350-400 tonnes; and taxation stimulated a large volume of trade over long distances. The Roman archaeological record, represented in this volume by a formidable weapons to demonstrate large-volume commerce, widely diffused and sophisticated in its organization, 40 million Italian wine-jars unloaded in Gaul during a single century (Tchernia), utilitarian and fine table ware from Arrezzo and elsewhere which Pliny described as "ennobling" the cities of its production (Pucci), and an incredible dispersion of North African pottery in Italy and throughout the Mediterranean from the last years of the first century AD (Carandini). This last author might have strengthened an already good case had he exploited recent work by D. Kehoe on the workers designated as *coloni* in Latin inscriptions from the great imperial estates of Africa: they were not peasants, it now appears, but, not unlike later French *colons*, farm-managers and agricultural entrepreneurs in their own right. And the publishers might have served their readers better had they provided illustrations of at least some of the artefacts on which the archaeologists' arguments rest. (The book's single illustration is Tchernia's distribution map of Italian amphorae in France, and as he himself astutely observes, such maps often reflect not so much the state of the actual remains, as the place where archaeologists happen to have been busy.)

Juvénal sardonically observed that, in the early Empire, more men were on sea than on land, such was their eagerness to be rich. He exaggerated of course: the ancient economy was primarily agricultural. Still, given the volume of commodities moved by sea, the size of Roman ships, the large sums of capital invested in trade, and - not least - the tendency for acquisitive instincts to cut across status boundaries, the question quickly arises: who were these traders and investors, in social terms? Whether explicit (as in the papers by Thompson, Garnsey, Pleket and Whittaker) or implicit (as in most of the others), the problem recurs, and though these and other scholars are in broad agreement that traders themselves were usually men of small means, backed by the capital of richer men, there is fierce dispute as to who the backers were and especially as to whether members of the Roman aristocracy engaged in

commercial enterprises. In Hellenistic Egypt, wealthy and respectable Alexandrians are found investing in Nile shipping (Thompson), and in Roman East, in Pleket's view, all urban notables normally found maritime commerce through the middlemen. On the other hand, Garnsey denies that western aristocrats financed trade through the use of dependents, preferring the investors as almost always everybody else, and Whittaker, writing on the late Empire, suggests that the late little use of entrepreneurs, middlemen, tidily channelled and uncontentiously urged to which might be susceptible into the disposition of surpluses from their landed estates.

Convictions like these derive from accepting essentially at face value the repeated assertions by upper-class Roman writers that only landed wealth was regarded as fully respectable. This thesis vigorously advocated by Pleket in *The Ancient Economy* (1979) is unlikely to be shaken by the discovery of more Roman consular names, or lead ingots from Spanish mines, or Tacitus's revelation that men of the rank were among the profiteers of Nero's reign, or by the many signs that Roman senators were notoriously engaged in commerce in a far from agricultural form - as in the evidence can always be drawn from the direct presence of weapons platforms under "conservation". The book, the product of a NATO Research Fellowship, could more appropriately be subtitled "A Study of Economics versus Politics". He makes no bones about giving economics priority, and in doing so he tends to ignore the military factor, at times almost dismissing it as just another form of bureaucratic, self-seeking pressure.

One of the virtues of Dr Hartley's book is that it debunks many of the facile platitudes which echo round the marble halls of Nato when questions of arms procurement are discussed. It points out that many of the requirements, which ministers and officials constantly reiterate, conflict with each other. "Eradicating wasteful duplication", whether it is in research and development, in production or in other stages of the procurement process, conflicts with competition, between nations and between firms, which the Americans, backed by Hartley, believe to be a key factor both in reducing costs and in achieving high performance. The complexity of all the interacting factors, military, economic and political, is well brought out - indeed to a degree that could make the general reader abandon the quest for a

## The wherewithal to fight

Michael Carver

KEITH HARTLEY

NATO Arms Co-operation: A Study in Economics and Politics  
228pp. Allen and Unwin. £18.50.  
0 04 341022 7

In the process of analysing the whole field of arms procurement within Nato, Keith Hartley breaks icons, slaughters sacred cows and never wavers far from his own personal preference, for the application of laissez-faire to the most rigorous Adam Smith kind to the trade in arms. His book, the product of a Nato Research Fellowship, could more appropriately be subtitled "A Study of Economics versus Politics". He makes no bones about giving economics priority, and in doing so he tends to ignore the military factor, at times almost dismissing it as just another form of bureaucratic, self-seeking pressure.

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solution in despair. Hartley subjects all the reasons given by Nato governments for insisting on a degree of national participation in arms procurement to a searching examination, taking as a starting point the exploded one, well established myth after another. At the same time he recognizes that national, political considerations have to be taken into account.

Because the aerospace field is the one which poses the greatest problems, and accounts for a high proportion of expenditure, he devotes a large part of his study to a detailed examination of joint aerospace projects - too large a part. The result is to obscure one of the conclusions to be drawn from the study: that the degree to which international collaboration is desirable is related to the unit cost, itself linked to the research and development element in it, of the weapon or weapon platform under consideration. The lower the cost is, the less the advantage in collaboration and the greater the advantage either of open competition or of national self-sufficiency.

Hartley accepts that, in the high-cost area, collaboration can provide a more economic answer than self-sufficiency, although it remains more expensive than the direct purchase from the most efficient producer, most likely to be the US; but he does not conceal his dislike of arrangements similar both to that which has produced the Anglo-German-Italian Tornado aircraft and that which covers European production of the US F16 fighter. His short concluding chapter gives guidelines, first for his ideal solution: a totally open market - and then for an interim policy, accepting national defence for participation in the R & D and in production. For the latter he advocates co-ordination of development, the prime contractor for development, equity in work-sharing being achieved

by allocating production to other participants in the project, with each specializing in a specific task. As far as the high-cost aerospace projects are concerned, he suggests a prototype competition between a US and a European design, the winner to complete development and allocate manufacture to American and/or European producers. He implies, although he does not specifically say so, that the plethora of Nato committees and staffs dealing with procurement and standardization could vanish into thin air with no loss to anyone.

His proposals should be welcomed by the military, who have too often been forced to accept a national product in preference to one which they believed to be both technically superior and available earlier, but they will have reservations. Hartley's release quest for the best buy could only too easily lead to greater national differences in equipment, particularly as it is very difficult to synchronize the time at which separate nations choose to replace their current inventories. It could also lead to even greater pressure than that which exists already to accept equipment which is primarily designed for world-wide sale, but is not technically adequate to compete with that with which the Soviet armed forces are likely to be equipped in the same time-scale.

*World Armaments and Disarmament: SIPRI Yearbook 1983* (681pp. Taylor and Francis. £26.00 85066 247 8), the fourteenth annual review to be produced by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, aims "to provide an overview of what is happening to military expenditure, to the arms trade, and to weapons development, production and deployment", and to report on current disarmament negotiations. The work includes an analysis of the 1982 Falkland conflict by Josef Goldblat and Victor Millan.

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The Letters of Margaret Fuller



# How beastly the bourgeois is

D. J. Enright

CHRISTER KIHLMAN

Sweet Prince  
Translated by Joan Tate  
232pp. Peter Owen. £8.95.  
0 7206 0606 3

This novel, written in Swedish by a Finn, has been "accepted in the European Series of the Translations Collection of UNESCO". Since (to go no further) the "C" has something to do with culture, it ought to be a pretty good book.

The hero is announced as "healthy, content and sober", which promises originality. He is also rich. "It was not exactly yesterday he had worried over how his money was to suffice." That, we suppose, is an instance of litotes. "He had had five wives, three in legal matrimony, and a great many other women as well." Hardly litotes again; but possibly pleonasm—or, in implying the existence of illegal matrimony, even oxymoron? In either case, "his habits, except when it came to women, were more spartan than dissolute": which means that he no longer confines himself to pheasant, venison, vintage wine, but nowadays prefers "cabbage pudding and a glass of non-fat milk". All this on page one. Later the hero tells us that "nothing is more nourishing than a woman's love, and in that respect I have been fortunate". He hardly needed black-pudding and non-fat milk.

He also tells us that he is "an incurable connoisseur of the parts of a woman's body her panties conceal". This may be a case of euphemistic expression, but the question remains, how would one go about curing a connoisseur? His connoisseurship, incidentally, is seen in his appreciation of a stripper: "She had a very lovely white tail, with oblong buttocks like pumpkins."

At times like this, the reviewer begins to fear that the reading of books, new books, has damaged his brain, and he had better turn himself in before he does something awful, like running amok in a public library. He will not be reassured by such psychosomatic phenomena as the sudden veering from one typeface into another and the alternation of heavily inked lines with passages so faint as to be barely legible. Do these things have a hidden significance? Dear God, let

them signify! But no, it's the nuthouse for him.

*Sweet Prince*—an inapt title, unless one conceives of *Hamlet* solely in terms of Eliot's diagnosis: intense feeling lacking an adequate object—is the memoirs of one Donald Blandh, a caretaker's child, related on the wrong side of the blanket to an old, distinguished and well-heeled Finnish family. Or, he informs us, his defence: which is doomed to failure in that he is patently indefensible, of a "violent and insolent temperament" and given to recommending such banal antimorals as that cheating is a better policy than honesty. As a youth, discharged from the army and finding that his mother (who supposed him dead) had given his clothes away, he "was very upset and felt a need to see blood"—so he kicked to death a passing lieutenant who expected a salute. Good or bad?

Blandh has risen from these miserable beginnings to quite abysmal heights, becoming a prosperous businessman and (incredibly) Minister of Defence, though not for long since he proposed to disband the armed forces. Mind you, it hasn't been all work and no play. "A day without sex has been a wasted day... I have been all been profitable investments, yielding useful political contacts, knowledge of music and literature, social savoir-faire—but also, which he is less happy about, children. "Moral niceties," he remarks in another gem of understatement, "have never been my field." Yet can it be a case of *corruptio optini pessima*? Has Blandh, an erstwhile Communist, been corrupted by the ugly-faced capitalism which (you might think from this account) he has himself virtually invented? That he has shown precious little sign of ever being among "the best" is no doubt beside the point. During a vignette of family life, one of his sons observes, "You crapped a great turd on your origins and joined the capitalist exploiters. Have you ever thought what a class-traitor bastard you are?"

"Bad language" doesn't of course exclude "significance", heavy doses of which are injected into the novel like silicone into those parts of a woman's body which her bra is meant to conceal. Thus, of the audience at a live-sex show in Stockholm:

This was the World of Men in its grotesque, distorted, perhaps also tragic meaning. They sat there in their armchairs, their eyes rigidly turned towards the curtain, soon to be drawn back to reveal new

sensations, new inflammatory or frustrating voyeuristic experiences. They tried to hide their faces in this way, by keeping their eyes rigid... They were ashamed. They were not at home here. Reluctantly and with beating pulse, they had been driven here by a force stronger than their inherent decency and petit bourgeois instincts.

After several pages of what might not unfairly be classed as pornographic writing, we are brought sternly to book: such goings-on illustrate "the most revolting results of the supreme rule of the capitalist principle of profitability in the world of bourgeois culture". More specifically Blandh is reflecting on low-budget blue movies which feature "men and women long past their youth, their bodies already having lost the vigour and firmness that make them attractive to look at", men and women fighting "a desperate and excruciatingly obvious and manifestly uneven struggle against humiliation, shame, and the merciless ghost of impotence". Plainly not the kind of fare fit for a connoisseur of oblong buttocks.

Included in the story's casualty list are a daughter (named Rosa, after Rosa Luxemburg) who died of a drug overdose in London, a drunken and unwashed drop-out son, and another son, Miles, who has just embezzled three million Finnish marks, and at once confessed to it. All is made clear by the letter Miles leaves when he kills himself. First, the reader has to plough through all the reasons for which Miles is *not* about to kill himself, and they are legion. We gather that the embezzled money has been deposited in a Swiss bank, with instructions for its use placed in the safe keeping of the Worker's Bank of Finland. Later it is revealed that the money is to finance the equipping of a people's army "in a particular country". Still later, that the particular country is "Finland."

Noble son of an ignoble father, Miles kills himself because "I'm sick and tired of being bourgeois. I can no longer endure being a bourgeois intellectual, an intellectual humanist." (So that is what he was?) Yet his belief in the cause and in his final victory is pure and fervent. "Communism corresponds to the world everyone has

always dreamt of, in which someone master, where love decides... Since—with the exception of one sweetly idealistic word of the deceased Miles—the book is published in 1975, by the way, with gloom, squalor, intrigue, lovelessness, contentment, and philosophicalizing, it would appear that the bourgeoisie needs to worry overmuch.

Of what, then, is *Sweet Prince* representative? Of (can it be still hopes not) Finnish life? Or merely representative of a lot of other things that somehow get published these days: representative in its pretensions (psychosocial history, political gestures (poor boy makes the top), its confused morality (rich boy has it both ways), and its generous chunks of subconsciously denounced sex (author has it both ways). Also—for I cannot believe translator is to be held responsible—in the wretched quality of the writing. Such representations now bears an official seal.

## Protean and picaresque

Paul Keegan

ROMAIN GARY

King Solomon  
Translated by Barbara Wright  
256pp. Harvill Press. £7.95.  
0 00 261416 2

GEORGES SIMENON

The Long Exile  
Translated by Eileen Ellenbogen  
365pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.  
0 241 10762 8

"I've had a lot of fun. Goodbye and thank you" is how Romain Gary signed off his literary suicide note, a document which astounded *tout Paris* when it appeared in 1980. Entitled the "Life and Death of Emile Ajar", it revealed that Gary, a successful novelist and Goncourt Prize winner, was also the author and onlie begetter of four best-selling novels supposedly written by Emile Ajar. "Ajar" never existed; nor was he a pseudonym in the usual sense, but an autonymic voice which for a decade coexisted with Gary's own literary persona; Gary continued publishing novels under his own name while writing as Ajar.

At some level Gary evidently did enjoy himself, but the cost of impersonation and the sense of a Faustian pact inform the mood of all the Ajar novels, particularly the last and most cunningly autobiographical, *L'Amour du Roi Salomon*. By translating it loosely as *King Solomon* Barbara Wright has sacrificed a title of some nicety for the novel concerns a philanthropist. Philanthropy may be the last refuge or protest of the Sinner Man. With Sartrean fearlessness Gary uses it to explore the dilemma of the individual who puts on a role even as he believes in it. The relationship between ventriloquy and despair which is hinted at as a motive for suicide in the "Life and Death of Emile Ajar" is addressed at length in *King Solomon*, which makes it appropriate that both texts are brought together in this volume. Moreover, it seems plausible that the need for "creative self-renewal" which inspired Gary to become "Ajar" was also a search for a voice which could express the sense of an ending and formulate the terminal anguish which is peculiar to these novels.

The octogenarian Solomon Rubinstein, former king of the ready-to-wear clothes trade, has become an old age benefactor of mankind and proprietor of SOS, a Parisian nightline for the lonely and unhappy. On the surface, philanthropy is Solomon's *démon*, as consuming a passion as any of the traditional fictional archetypes of diabolical behaviour, such as the gambler or the collector, both of whom he resembles. Solomon gambles; his largesse, randomly if discreetly, he collects photographs and old postcards—junk dealers reserve those written

with the most emotion—because he likes to honour the anonymous dead. The ironic inscrutability with which Solomon chooses those whom he helps borders on the gratuitous, and in his arbitrary pieties and combative attachment to the outmoded and the obsolete he is something of a surrealist.

Solomon recruits Jean—the narrator—as a youthful protégé and alter-ego, because Jean has an old-fashioned face. A born humanitarian, Jean nevertheless looks like a throwback to a celluloid and musical culture which defied the thug. His first mission is to visit the ancient Mlle Cora Lamare, once the doyenne of the *chanson réaliste*, a forgotten genre whose songs were noted for their obligatory unhappy endings. The hint of thuggery is not lost on her, and she falls for Jean because he looks like a remake of Jean Gabin ("a face made for love"). Jean encourages her out of love for his fellow-men, because she epitomizes all that is most endangered in the human species. He keeps a photograph of her under his pillow which in fact depicts a Breton seagull bogged down in an oil slick. For Jean, as for Solomon, the human fraternity includes nature. As no one should ever be despised or humiliated, Jean becomes Cora's lover. It is here that the redemptive project breaks down, for Cora's age inspires in him a physical revulsion "which made it not a woman struggling up to me but a guy—and I had homosexual repugnance". He is so repelled that he has an erection and copulates with her with a perverse vigour, thereby living up to her Jean Gabin fantasies. He subsequently refers to his act as "cruelty to animals".

The Nietzschean assertion that as a moral being the individual must yield to the sovereignty of another's needs is here confronted by a corollary: that such a morality requires the performance of an actor. Jean's philanthropic act is a piece of contorted histrionics, an inversion of the natural order, the domain of indifference and oblivion. Hence Solomon's obscure anguish (Jean's merely a second self, a proxy phallus) that his philanthropy can never come as naturally as the leaves to the tree.

The recognition of the moral nature: as at best protean reflects Gary's own stylized preoccupations. In the "Life and Death of Emile Ajar" he offers two reasons for becoming Ajar: a nostalgic urge for renewal, and the capitulation to "the oldest protean temptation of man, that of multiplicity". Both undergo a sea-change in *King Solomon*: in Solomon's self-renewal, by philanthropic attachment to the things of this world, and in his vicarious largesse. Moreover, Solomon's nostalgic attempt to redeem time is a reflection on popular art; its quietism and inbuilt obsolescence combined with the forces latent in "atmosphere" and in the songs once heard upon everyone's lips. In some sense Gary reviews a career as a popular writer. All these

preoccupations are far from integral in *King Solomon*; rather they lie by the side, and the novel is puzzlingly private—the cryptic farewell of a hand.

As Ajar, Gary tried to escape a certain image of himself, but he did not differ in kind from the others, like his readers sensed thematic or stylistic affinities. Only the one claimed that a different order of involvement, and praised Ajar's expense of Gary whenever a question of resemblances was raised. Unlike Simenon, who longed for immortality and hankered after strange fictional gods (Frank Conrad), Gary's faith in the conventional remained unshakable, and, perhaps because his sense of public was more intellectual, Simenon's Gary wished to remain a popular novelist, and his language Ajar was to play concealed games on the conventions, not to escape them.

Written in 1936, *The Long Exile* one of Simenon's exotic romances, an ambitious psychological study without a Maigret or even a novel plot. The narrative is loose and uncoiled, as it drifts and wanders disturbingly with the plot, the trajectory of its characters. The novel concerns a trio: Jef and Camille, who are fleeing retribution for a murder committed in Paris, and Captain Moppo, who smuggles them on board his ship in return for Charlotte's favours. After a jungle year in the Colombian jungle, the couple, now with a child, manage to rejoin Moppo in Tahiti, where a circumstantial harmony of the previous arrangement is disrupted because neither the cynical Moppo nor the ingenious Jef knows which of the two is the father. A study has yet to be written on the uses of foreign and realist novel, and the parallel narratives of loss which it engenders. In *The Long Exile* the novel is a prison-house of vegetation and the garden of delights, yet the one and the other serves only to illustrate the dictum that nothing is harder to lose than a succession of fair days.

Despite its portmanteau moments the novel retains an expressive economy reminiscent of Maigret books; when Jef has tuberculosis he thinks of having his X-rayed and is struck by an afterthought: "It would be really a kind—that the child was really the kind and the popular notion of art as a kind of doomed heronism, which he exploited so usefully in Maigret novels), are capable of compression usually denied psychological narratives which aspired to later on. It is the plain of the point of muteness, which is a genuine affinity with the Combray 'simple tale'.

## Among the country-club set

David Montrose

EVAN S. CONNELL

Mrs. Bridge  
246pp. Sinclair Browne. £7.95.  
(paperback, £3.95).  
0 86300 026 6

Mr. Bridge  
367pp. Sinclair Browne. £8.95  
(paperback, £4.95).  
0 86300 025 8

Originally published in 1959 and 1969 respectively, and now appearing in Britain for the second time (not, as the publishers claim, the first), *Mrs Bridge* and *Mr Bridge* are set chiefly among the country-club crowd of Kansas City during the 1930s. Despite the intervening years, the lifestyle depicted remains essentially that described by Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* back in 1899: a parallel emphasized when, eighty-one pages into *Mrs Bridge*, Evan S. Connell's eponymous heroine chances upon Veblen's treatise in her local bookstore.

Each novel comprises a mosaic of brief episodes, chronologically arranged, from its central character's life. Mr Bridge, a prosperous lawyer, spends long hours money-grubbing, seeing his wife and three children mainly at the dinner-table; Mrs Bridge, an "office widow", struggles with the problem of occupying her hollow days. The usual time-hillers are denied her. Naturally, she does not have a job; a maid takes care of the housework; the children, maturing, do not depend on her. What's left is shopping and a round of ineffectual socializing with similar wives of similar husbands. Various attempts to transcend this deadly routine—through good causes, learning Spanish, improving her vocabulary, painting lessons—prove merely short-lived enthusiasms.

Connell's "gentle" satire tends to underestimate just how mediocre creature Mrs Bridge is: the acme of conventionalism, unremarkable in everything but her Christian name—India. Blandly pleasant, resolutely uncontroversial, she prefers not to think about the unpleasant things in life; encountering unfamiliar opinions, she retreats with a nervous smile. Every decision is made for her by dominant Mr Bridge; she does once resolve to vote contrary to his instructions, only to lose her nerve in the polling-booth.

To some extent, Mrs Bridge is the product of a masculine caste which perceives women as fragile beings needing insulation against the world. After many years of marriage, Mr Bridge reflects on her "extraordinary naivete" and realizes that he is partly to blame for it, but by then it is too late for change.

As far as respectability goes, Mr Bridge is very much a masculine version of his wife. His formality is remarked on even by those to whom formality is commonplace; among men, he will be the only one not to laugh at a dirty joke. And though, unlike Mrs Bridge, he does hold strong opinions—being ultra-conservative, anti-Semitic, anti-black, anti-homosexual—he rarely advances them outside the home. Yet he is a more complex figure altogether; Veblen stated that Leisure Class husbands were driven by status-hunger: the wives "enjoying" opulent inactivity symbolized their worldly success. But Mr Bridge's workaholicism is motivated by an obsessive determination to be entirely different from his father, who made little money and lost that little through unwise investment. In addition, he is preoccupied with securing his family's material welfare after his death (unknown to them, he has heart-trouble). His father left no estate; the same must not befall his dependants. Rationalizing all the evidence to the contrary, Mr Bridge sincerely believes the family to be happy. As his son, Douglas, writes towards the end of *Mrs Bridge*: "He did not ever realize that what he needed was himself instead of what he could give us."

The Bridges both possess a fuzzy half-awareness that life is not all it seems. Mrs Bridge, however, is a grand onslaught.

could be. In different authorial hands, they might have rebelled against the proprieties, like Sinclair Lewis's Carole Kennicott and George Babbitt. But their faith in the correctness of their narrow path through life ultimately remains unshaken. Assorted individualists cross that path for the express purpose of demonstrating the couple's imperviousness to unorthodox influences. Mrs Bridge is implicitly contrasted with argumentative, neurotic Grace Barron, the suburban set's resident misfit and internal critic, Mr Bridge with Alex Sauer, a psychiatrist whose small-scale bohemianism offends Bridge's notion of how a professional man should comport himself. A central event of both novels is the Bridges' trip to Europe, which serves merely to reinforce their confidence in the superiority of the Middle-American way.

A recurrent theme concerns the upbringing of the Bridge children. Husband and wife are heavy parents; Mrs Bridge, in particular, strives to combat any manifestations of nonconformity. In reaction, the eldest child, Ruth, acquires a reputation for promiscuity and, after graduating from high school, opts for a free time of things in New York. Carolyn, conversely, grows into an archetypal Leisure Class woman. After committing the error of marrying outside that class, she is appalled at being expected to clean and cook. She prefers to play golf all day. Only the

youngest child, the quirky Douglas, seems unscathed, replacing one minor eccentricity with another in his own good time. Both novels have an autobiographical air—Connell was born in Kansas City in 1924—and nowhere more so than in this characterization.

As a sequel coming ten years after its predecessor, *Mr Bridge* has inevitably been overshadowed by the reputation of *Mrs Bridge*, the work for which Connell is still best known. Admittedly, read after *Mrs Bridge*, it does prove an anticlimax: such is the novels' basic similarity, despite having few episodes in common, that *Mr Bridge* can seem largely given over to expanding familiar portraits. Yet *Mr Bridge* remains the better novel, purely on the strength of its more absorbing central figure.

Whatever their respective merits, the novels bear witness equally to Connell's admirably accurate grasp of a social phenomenon that has by no means ceased to exist even today. Perhaps his finest achievement is that he generally avoids the imitative fallacy, conveying the banality and tedium of Leisure Class life without reproducing those symptoms in his evocative yet unfussy prose. It might have been more realistic, though, to distribute the task of embodying the proprieties among a greater number of characters. With their zealous servitude to decorum, the Bridges are, one suspects, less typical of the country club set than even Grace Barron and Alex Sauer.

## Redemptive notes

Adam Mars-Jones

JOHN GARDNER

The Art of Living  
284p. Secker and Warburg. £8.50.  
0 436 17252 6

The title of John Gardner's collection of stories has acquired a retrospective irony with his death in a motorcycle accident last September. The abrupt ending of his literary career makes it harder to assess these final productions, which testify neither to falling powers nor to startling progress. *The Art of Living* is a respectable achievement, and perhaps it is only the book's biographical context that makes such a verdict seem grudging.

The materials of the collection are certainly varied. "The Joy of the Just", for example, is a tall tale rather in the Faulkner mode, the story of Aunt Ella Reikert's exemplary revenge on a preacher who has done her wrong. The characters are well versed in low cunning, and uniformly able to justify their chicaneries by Biblical quotation. "Viemk the Box-Printer", by contrast, is a sophisticated fairy-story, somewhat over-extended at novella length, about a painter in love with a Princess, who succeeds in painting a portrait of her so lifelike that it can speak. The portrait promptly puts a curse of silence on him.

It is the stories which don't belong to any particular genre which are puzzling; they are carefully written with playful detail and the impression of substance, but there is little that is distinctive about them. They could as easily be the first chapters of novels that never got written.

The first two stories have odd, oblique resolutions. In "Nimnam" a famous conductor meets a dying girl, who is terrified of flying, on an aeroplane; she is young enough to be his daughter, he thinks, and then realizes that she might be exactly that. He makes no mention of the possibility, though he doesn't quite dismiss it, and they part at the airport. The next night, the girl attends the concert at which he conducts Mahler's Fifth, and the music is described from her point of view: "all that wide valley of orchestra playing, calm, serene, a vast sweep of music as a smooth and sharp-edged as an enormous scythe—she had never in her life heard a sound so broad as if all of humanity, living and dead, had come together for one grand onslaught."

In his description of the preparation and serving of the Imperial Dog John Gardner achieves an effective blend of the macabre and the matter-of-fact; but for too much of this posthumous volume he seems to be working within his powers, turning out solid, likeable stories which deliver just a little less than they promise.

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## Jonathan Cape

## commentary

### Satirical sittings

Russell Davies

Harry Furniss 1854-1925:  
Confessions of a Caricaturist  
National Portrait Gallery



A. C. Swinburne as seen by Harry Furniss: a caricature from the exhibition reviewed here.

### Restless revenants

Peter Kemp

Shades of Darkness  
ITV

Granada's series, *Shades of Darkness*, gave substantial coverage to the supernatural. Fleeting on seven ghost stories into well-rounded plays, it resurrected period styles with uncanny fidelity and conjured up a fascinating range of baleful atmospheres.

Despite the diversity of writers drawn upon - from Edith Wharton to Walter de la Mare - similar motifs kept materializing. Chief among these was the sequestered setting. Houses that were old and isolated - remote from the communal and contemporary, and unspoiled by such ghost-dispelling inconveniences as electricity - provided the most popular locales. Being off the beaten track seemed a prerequisite for spectral visitation. L. P. Hartley's *The Foremost* worked an inventive variation on this formula: here, a sixteenth-century hall was not only physically cut off but also psychologically beleaguered - besieged by a crippled and malevolent apparition who, if unknowingly carried in across the threshold, ensured that a corpse was soon being carried out across it.

Though settings tended to be out of the ordinary, normality was favoured for the central figures - down-to-earth observers who threw weird goings-on into relief as well as lending credibility to them. The ghosts they encountered varied much from near-broken child to a squashed woodcutter - generally seemed to flow from someone's emotional obsession with a sex-unleashing particularly virulent force: a destroyed lover, was at the centre of *The Maze*; the revengeful revenant in *The Interceptor* was an outraged bride; *The Interceptor* and *Bewitched* chided round infidelities of various kinds.

Of the pieces dramatized, those by Edith Wharton had greatest reverberation. Writing once about her attraction to the ghost story genre, she referred to her 'intense Celtic sense of the supernatural' and recalled how reaching a terror-tale when she was ill with typhoid left her feverishly susceptible to such works for long afterwards. 'I could not sleep in the room with a book containing a ghost story. I have frequently had to turn books of this kind because I

frightened me to know that they were downstairs in the library!' The writing of her own ghost stories was perhaps intended to slay such lingering fears. A notable feature of the three here dramatized was that the ghosts were far less ghastly than the living. *The Lady's Maid's Bell*, the first supernatural story Edith Wharton wrote, obviously emanated from her own miserable marriage: hovering protectively round her sensitive, mistress-like some guardian angel, the spirit of a devoted servant tries to shield her from her husband's jealous cruelties. A shoddy spouse also figured in *Afterward*, where financial shadiness attracted spectral retribution. *Bewitched* - rather weakened in its transfer to the screen - is an obliquely revealing tale. Set in the same icy New England countryside as *Ethan Frome*, it derives much of its chilliness from glacial landscapes: stretches of snow under eerie green twilights, pine-trunks purple by the dropping sun. As in *Ethan Frome* too, the physical desolation is an apt background to lives of emotional frigidity. Psychologically numbed herself by the coldness she encountered both as a child and as a wife, Wharton enters into this world with bitter imaginative intensity. In *Bewitched*, the spectres of starved need are set swirling through a frost-bound mountain community. By transferring the scene to a Cornish seaside setting, the television version, despite a performance of bloodless ferocity from Eileen Atkins, lost some of the story's stark resonance.

This *Shades of Darkness* was alright, however, compared with that effected upon *Season's Aunt* by its adaptor, Ken Taylor. Retelling the way a ghoul-guardian batters on her hapless ward, the story by Walter de la Mare operates through masterly understatement, especially in its closing scenes. There, amid the low-visibility fog congenial to the ghost story - (thickening twilight and murky suspicions - the narrator comes to fear that the knowledge of Season's Aunt being carried over in the grave by his implacable and seemingly immortal aunt - Taylor's version killed off the aunt, but, to indicate that Season was still under her creepy Psycho-like spell - in a bizarre, afterword, 'I could not sleep in the room with a book containing a ghost story. I have frequently had to turn books of this kind because I

The cartoonist-clubman, therefore, is no great rarity. He happens naturally. His mugged-out retreat at the Garrick or Savage gives him the company of policy-makers and opinion-shapers, and if necessary an innocent disfigure of the two classic follies of the comic draughtsman: misogyny and alcoholism. Suffering neither of these disabilities to any visible extent, Harry Furniss (1854-1925) shows forth the gentleman-comedian type at its most serene. As the exhibition *Confessions of a Caricaturist*, at the National Portrait Gallery until September 25, makes plain, Furniss was corpulent and jovial and admirably fitted for a deep armchair; but he escaped from the clubman's world often enough to carry on the untroubled married life that so many of his fellow-professionals have been denied. In the circumstances, Alison Oprey's programme-note to the effect that 'his domestic life was unremarkable for its stability and happiness' might have been better phrased.

Furniss was Irish-born, from Wexford - just the kind of minimal tinge of outsiderliness that seems to help the satirists of England on their way. Not that Harry had any very burning satirical intent. He was merely a young man with a sense of humour and a facility for drawing, gifts he combined while still at school in a handmade comic magazine called *The Schoolboy's Punch*. He worked briefly in Dublin, arrived in London at the age of nineteen, and was soon covering election meetings and suchlike for the *Illustrated London News*. By the 1890s he was *Punch's* resident Parliamentary artist, and working with Lewis Carroll on the latter's disappointing *Sylvie and Bruno*. He was a member of (at least) the Gaiety, Beefsteak, Savage and Garrick clubs, not to mention the *Punch* table, a club in itself.

Furniss's versatility ran in parallel with - indeed was probably an aspect of - his sociability. He fell in happily with available company; and the same thing happened on the page. His subjects dictated his style. Thus even in a small exhibition of some sixty-odd items, one's first glance picks up little in the way of an encouraging unity. While it would not be true to say that every character depicted by Furniss inhabits a genre of its own, the effect does rather resemble the fabled lovely bunch of coconuts - big ones, small ones, some as big as your head.

Sometimes Furniss's heads are to scale, sometimes they are whoppingly overblown in the style recently popularized by David Levine. It is noticeable that when he refrains from distorting bodily proportions, Furniss's work can bear quite a close resemblance to that of his contemporary Phil May, who shared his habit - though neither man was consistent about it - of sketching limbs and body boldly, while giving heads a more delicate, ethereal, pencil treatment. In Furniss's case, one might profitably draw from this the rule 'Paint head never, won't fair opinion'; for surely the most common fault among Furniss's less successful drawings is the disparity between the rather prim Victorian carefulness of the heads and the rumbustious, inky, comedy-of-posture bodies upon which they rest. He seems to have rejoiced in legs especially. Precious few eminent Victorians will have complained of

being made to look stunted by his figures.

The man most fully Furnissian present exhibition is Mr Gladstone whose trousers in real life were encouragingly tubular. His huge collars, besides being unimpaired occasionally saved the cartoonist from doing work, since most of Gladstone's features could be left between the upstanding collar and leaving only a fierce and inscrutable eye peeping over the top. The ensemble put Furniss in mind of the masterpieces hereabouts. Gladstone as eight vultures all at it. But the masterpiece hereabouts is Gladstone's 'Waiting to Spring' the posture is all: hunched low from his front-bench seat with his legs crossed between his legs to prop up his thin - a rare attitude, somehow deeply familiar, post from Indian pow-wows in old days.

The early years of this cartoonist brought Harry Furniss himself in contact with Thomas Edison and American cinema. He wrote about in a book called *Our Lady Cinema* in fact he wrote so much, by way of commentary and memoir, that it would have thought quite a bit of his own *Peace and War* - *Peace* by Harry Furniss, which has been video-taped to round out the exhibition (the odd item of cartoon furniture to bump into would be helped no end).

In the film, Furniss appears as an emboldened and jovially inking away with a brush, recklessness doubtless redolent of the primitive camera technology of this time. It would appear that habit of ritually bouncing up and down on a vaulting-horse put him, for the purpose in his studio. His cartoon of the day was a splashily gaudy fantasy in which German soldiers their heads knocked together by a malleable Allied kangaroo. The lack of discernible merit of any kind - reminder that facility, facility and slapdash public confidence are not rewarded in their own day or ours. The nearer we come to meeting Furniss in person, the more easily we recognize in him a man whose telephone address was 'L14400, London'.

The catalogue to the exhibition at Alison Oprey's (23pp, with 16 illustrations, National Portrait Gallery, 50p, 0 9040 17 51-6).

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## commentary

### Flattered into self-exposure

R. V. Holdsworth

JOHN MARSTON  
The Fawn  
Cottesloe Theatre

Marstonian satire is an acquired taste. 'Lashing the lewdness of *Briannia*', as he puts it in *The Scourge of Villainy*, in order to 'purge the stoniness of our silly time'. Marston's regular response to human depravity is a state of foaming outrage, fuelled by an assumption that people must be disgusting because they have such disgusting things as bodies. 'All things that live must rot', argues Malevole in *The Malcontent*, 'this earth 'tis the very muck-hill on which the tributary orbs cast their excrements, man is the slime of this dung-pit, and princes are the governors of these men'. If men behave like dogs ('Quake gudge dog, that live on putrid slime'), so will Marston; he is a 'barking satirist', 'sharp-fanged', whom no muzzle will tame. Such frenzies rapidly pall. They did at the time for the anonymous author of the *Parnassus* plays, who re-applied Marston's canine metaphor by accusing him of 'lifting up your leg and pissing against the world', and also for Ben Jonson, who made Marston, as the character Crispinus in *Poetaster*, vomit up his brutal diction into a basin, and recommended that he experiment in future with 'fair abstinence'.

*Poetaster*, or *The Fawn* - the first part of the title is modelled on *Poetaster* and means 'fake parasite' - is a cheering exception to Marston's standard rabid spoutings. The plot is partly to thank for this. A version of the 'disgraced duke' story which appears at the same date, 1604, in

*Measure for Measure* and Middleton's *The Phoenix*, it concerns Hercules, Duke of Ferrara, who sends his son Tiberio to arrange a marriage on his behalf with Dulcimel, daughter of Gonzago Duke of Urbino. Hercules follows to observe the outcome, and, disguised as the Fawn, settles down to study 'the giddy sea of humour' which floods the Urbino court, where Gonzago, a garrulous bore, is 'gently fanned with the soft glazes of his own flatterers' lips'. The flatterers include Nymphadoro, who nurtures an Aguecheek-like longing for the princess (though he consoles himself by keeping thirty-nine other ladies in tow); Herod Frappatore, a braggart and the paid lover of the wife of his brother, the sexually exhausted Sir Amoroso Deblie-Dosso; and Zuccone, a jealous buffoon whose wife Donna Zoya, like Shakespeare's Mistress Ford, teaches him a sharp lesson. Instead of a frontal assault, Hercules' technique of correction is to flatter the courtiers into self-exposure, after which they are sent for a voyage on a ship of fools captained by Gonzago's jester, Dondolo. Meanwhile, Dulcimel, a very Shakespearean heroine in her freshness and spirit, finds she prefers Tiberio to the portrait of his ageing father, and secretly woos and wins him, even though he 'ever loathed a thought of woman'.

The prominence of the love-plot would make Marston's usual wisps and scorns out of place ('Where two hearts yield consent, all thwarting's vain', is the message Dulcimel smuggles to Tiberio), and another reason for their absence is the growing influence on Marston of Montaigne, particularly of Montaigne's view that the force of sexual passion must be accepted, though controlled by reason. This

permits a decidedly unMarstonian endorsement of man's physical nature. Here it is the pompous Gonzago who declares 'as we are flesh and blood, alas, we are fools', and his wisest daughter, herself 'a creature of a good healthy blood', who rejects 'book-thinking creatures' and tells her chaperone to 'confer with me like a creature made of flesh and blood'. At the end of the play we even hear Hercules, as he watches his son climb the plane tree to Dulcimel's balcony, offer a pacan to 'genital heats', a phrase which would have different connotations in *The Scourge of Villainy*.

The play's jollity and humanity are marvelously caught in Giles Block's production, apparently the first since the original performance by the Queen's Revels Children at the Blackfriars. The set itself suggests these qualities. It is a courtyard of peach-coloured stone, against a backdrop of bright blue sky, at one point darkened and a twinkling fireworks for the princess's birthday festivities. Blossoms are strewn the floor (appropriately, as Dulcimel banters poignantly over a withered flower with Tiberio at their first meeting, and is later called a bud), and the briefly functional plane tree, begirt with cushions and in full leaf, branches up to the galleries. The cast also keeps neatness at bay. Basil Henson's very funny Gonzago is an amiable old buff without a hint of arrogance, despite the obedient applause which punctuates his sophistries. Karl Johnston's Nymphadoro, in pink doublet and matching garter, is tragically low-toned, tenderly retrieving Dulcimel's withered flower after she has discarded it, and trotting about at the feast with a large red quaking jelly, a nice emblem

of himself (the courtiers generally seem to prefer kiddies' party food to anything that smacks of adult indulgence). The production's dominating role is not the ubiquitous Hercules, an oddly lifeless rendering by Bernard Lloyd, but Miranda Foster's vibrant Dulcimel, quite believably fifteen in manner, if not in looks. Only James Hayes's Zuccone, terrorized and twitching, and screaming in horror when his wife's supposed bastard is thrown in the air (it turns out to be a cushion) suggests anything really unpleasant.

Jollification is also behind the production's one major change, the promotion of Dondolo to comic presenter. He speaks the archly audience-flattering prologue, the epilogue, and some of Hercules' lines, and pairs off Hercules with Dulcimel's chaperone at the end (in the text he stays single). At one point he reads the programme, at another he pops up in the audience to describe the statesmen who are on board his ship of fools - 'some long fortunate politicians, some purple fellows whom chance reared, and their own deficiencies of spirit hurled down' - when, rather unfairly, he imitates Roy Jenkins. *The Fawn* is actually a bit darker than this. The unmuzzled Marston is sometimes heard, as in the denunciation of the local sewage system ('here in the city a man shall have his excrements in his teeth again within four and twenty hours'), the details of Sir Amoroso's venereal problems ('last morning he blew nine bones out of his nose'), or the sketch of the old lady whose breath is so bad that birds drop down dead as they fly past her. But a dose of *The Scourge of Villainy* will make the lightning bearable.

### Female pioneers

Kyril FitzLyon

L'avant-garde au féminin

Artcurial, avenue Matignon, Paris

Russia's startling cultural renaissance in the reign of its last emperor, particularly in the early years of the present century, has often been remarked upon. For a brief moment Russia became, says Camilla Gray in her authoritative history of modern Russian painting, *The Great Awakening*, a 'truly international centre of the artistic world', and by about 1911 'the Russians emerged at last as pioneers in the modern movement'. A striking feature of this movement is the very considerable role, both qualitative and quantitative, so influentially in their country's artistic upsurge, far more so than anywhere else in the world. Their tentatively suggested answer is that the legal position and educational opportunities of women in Imperial Russia were somewhat in advance of Western Europe at the time, and this may have resulted in their correspondingly greater contribution. (The Marcadés, more fanciful additional suggestion refers to 'les vestiges d'un matriarcat archaïque', but wisely leave it with a question mark. Two or even three question marks would have been wiser still.)

The oldest of the exhibitors, though not as old as the catalogue makes her out to be (she was born in 1870, not in 1860, and died in 1938), is Marianna Verlovkina, more widely known as Marianna von Wertheim. She spent many years in Munich, that alternative Mecca - alternative to Paris, that is - of Russian artists at the turn of the century, and was able to exert a considerable influence on her compatriot and contemporary in Munich, Kandinsky, as regards both his paintings and his ideas expressed in his famous treatise *On the Spiritual in Art*.

A role analogous to Verlovkina's in Munich is claimed for Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979) in Paris where she spent most of her life, but kept her Russian contacts and liked to speak of 'the Slav tonality' of her colour. By this she meant the blues, reds and yellows which she so freely used in her numerous abstract paintings (many shown in this exhibition) and which she remembered seeing in the gaily coloured objects of everyday use made by peasants in her native Ukraine.

A much more significant and more influential figure undoubtedly is Natalia Goncharova (1881-1962), who tried her hand at a variety of art forms - sculpture, stage décor (in the West she is probably best remembered for her *Le Cœur d'Or* designs for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes), dress designing, a new form of book illustration, text to use text stylistically as well as thematically, and painting on all kinds of material, including the human face. The first artistic influence she consciously absorbed, like most Russian painters of her time, was French Impressionism, but fairly early in her career she 'shook off the dust of the West from her feet' (her own characteristic expression) and turned to native Russian art, deriving her inspiration from icons and *lubki* (prints somewhat akin to chap-books). In the exhibition, which includes some of her designs for *Le Cœur d'Or*, she is perhaps most effectively represented by her Rayonist works (1912-13), based on the theory that 'the eye does not see actual objects, but only the rays emanating from them' and responsible for laying the foundations of Russian abstract painting.

There is, unfortunately, no space here to comment on all the participants of the exhibition. But it is impossible not to mention Liubov Popova (1889-1924) and Nadezhda Oudaltsova (1886-1961) whose Suprematist and Constructivist designs, of which the exhibition provides several striking examples, were and still are highly regarded and had considerable influence in their day. Alexandra Exter (1882-1949), the pioneer of Russian Futurism in sets and costumes for the theatre, is represented by seven items including a photograph of a scene from her production of *Antonsky's Thais* in the *Chitrapedia*, for which she designed scenery and costumes. It ran in Moscow's Kamenny Theatre in the

Russian than Western European. think of their artistic achievement in terms of feminism. One of the most attractive of the Paris art galleries, Artcurial, calling itself the 'Centre d'art plastique contemporain', has set out to remedy the omission.

*L'avant-garde au féminin* is devoted exclusively to the women participants of the Russian modern movement. Altogether twenty-two artists are represented. No doubt, say the authors of the informative, excellently produced and lavishly illustrated catalogue, Jean-Claude and Valentine Marcadés, these twenty-two are the most important of the Russian women-painters of the time, but if the organizers had had their way, they would have included over fifty exhibitors. Why is it, ask the Marcadés, that women in Russia, though so extensively and so influentially in their country's artistic upsurge, far more so than anywhere else in the world, their tentatively suggested answer is that the legal position and educational opportunities of women in Imperial Russia were somewhat in advance of Western Europe at the time, and this may have resulted in their correspondingly greater contribution. (The Marcadés, more fanciful additional suggestion refers to 'les vestiges d'un matriarcat archaïque', but wisely leave it with a question mark. Two or even three question marks would have been wiser still.)

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beginning of 1917. Such was the success obtained by the *mise-en-scène* that, according to a contemporary critic, the public's interest in it competed with the excitement aroused by the speeches of the nation of Imperial Russia's imminent collapse and the inevitability of revolution.

The exhibition contains 181 items in all, of which 154 are pictures and the rest books illustrated by women artists of the period. The books are particularly welcome since they emphasize the equality of partnership of literature and plastic arts in a country where literature had for a long time led the way and imposed on plastic arts both its values and its themes. In fact, it could justly be said that painting and graphics had by then, for the first short time in Russia, gained a slight edge on the literary expression of ideas. It may be worth adding that the catalogue's sub-title, 'Moscow - Saint-Petersburg - Paris 1909-1930' is slightly misleading since the earliest exhibit, a water colour by Sonia Delaunay, goes back to 1904, while the latest, a charcoal sketch by Tatiana Glebova, is dated 1934; and many of the artists had never lived or exhibited in Paris or anywhere else in France. Tragically, what most, though not all, of them have in common is their rejection by their own country and their consequent exile after the Revolution so many of them: had welcomed.

To commemorate the centenary of Manet's death, the National Gallery is to mount, from August 10 to October 9, an exhibition called *Manet at Work*, which will bring together about twenty-five works - oils, pastels, etchings, lithographs and drawings. Four major paintings - 'Music in the Tuileries Gardens', 'The Walkway', 'The Execution of Eva Gonzales' - will be discussed in detail, and shown with related sketches and prints. 'The Walkway' shows how it was once part of a larger composition. One part of the exhibition centres on images of war, with drawings and lithographs of soldiers. There will also be a course of eight lectures.

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# The Master in faeryland

Derrick Puffett

Lewis Foreman

Bax: A composer and his times  
491pp. Scholar. £27.50.  
0 85967 643 9

Lewis Foreman's *Bax: A composer and his times* is a fascinating book, which should be read by anyone interested in English music. It is full of information, not only about Bax but about the whole period in which he worked, with illuminating sidelights on Elgar, Delius, Vaughan Williams and many others. It is far more detailed than any previous study of the composer. Much of this detail takes the form of hitherto unpublished letters, some of them highly revealing, or other documents, such as BBC memoranda. It is also well written, no small virtue in a work of such length. Finally, though written with obvious affection, it takes an admirably objective view of its subject. It deserves a place alongside Michael Kennedy's *Portrait of Elgar* and John Bird's *Life of Percy Grainger* as a classic of English musical biography.

The external aspects of Bax's life are well known. The wealthy family, the private education, the period at the Royal Academy of Music, the visits to Ireland and Scotland, the phenomenal output of symphonies, tone poems and chamber music (not to mention a host of other works, listed in Foreman's exhaustive catalogue), the final years as Master of the King's Music—all this is familiar from previous books, though every one of these areas is here illuminated by new detail. Bax's personality, however, has always been something of a mystery, not only because he was a complex man, who liked to keep his friends in separate compartments (to the extent that AE, who knew him only as a fellow poet, was amazed to hear him talking about music), but because his "celtic" nature, which would have been

vague and flowery style from his biographers. Less twilight and more daylight was needed here. Without psychologizing about his subject, but simply by presenting him in fuller detail, Foreman establishes a much more credible figure; not necessarily a more likeable one, but one with whom it is easier to sympathize precisely because of his contradictoriness. Foreman does not try to whitewash Bax's less attractive characteristics; he just gives the facts and lets them speak for themselves. Bax's lack of interest in the First World War (Foreman describes his attitude as "disinterested", but that is the wrong word) may be easier to understand now than it was at the time, though it still seems odd. Indifference is, after all, a form of self-protection. On the other hand, Bax's description of the bombing of London as "totally without charm", even if intended as ironic, sounds callous. In 1920, when his national reputation was more or less secure, he wrote to *The Sunday Times* proposing that all German music should be banned from British concert programmes and that only English and American works should be played. He was surprised at how badly this proposal was received.

In his personal dealings Bax was warm and generous: there is a letter of 1919 in which he consoles a friend most tenderly over the break-up of her marriage (Bax had separated from his wife the previous year). He was also prone to self-dramatization: in a letter of 1917 he writes of the "lovely and sometimes rather tragic adventures in which Tania and I are wandering". "Tania" was the pianist Harriet Cohen, whose relationship with Bax forms one of the principal themes of the book. Their picture appears on the front cover, Tania looking selfless, absorbed, a little too conscious of her own beauty, while Bax wears a mournful, long-suffering expression. They met in 1913. Previous books on Bax have mentioned Harriet only fleetingly, if at all, and then only in

approved by the lady herself. (A book on Bax which was planned in the late 1940s had to be abandoned because of her constant interference.) Foreman shows that her influence on Bax was almost wholly destructive, not least because she insisted on having exclusive performance rights over music she could barely play.

But Bax brought a lot of it on himself. In the same letter of 1917 he writes that "the whole of life has been altered by this wonderful stray creature from the faery hills". He always thought of his women in such terms. In 1926 he met Mary Gleaves, a much younger woman than Harriet; he loved her for the rest of his life, not telling Harriet about her until 1948 (when predictable tantrums ensued). Foreman recounts this sort of thing with remarkable coolness. In 1931 Bax wrote to Mary: "I know I often ask you if you mind being treated as something between a faery and a child, and maybe you wish I would sometimes speak of ordinary life and all the grimness which most of my music deals with. But I can't, yet, my little love. I am so impossibly happy in the faeryland where I first found you." We are not told how Mary reacted to this. Then in 1937, when he was in his fifties, he fell in love with yet another woman, whom he described as a "faery princess". This hopeless idealizing of one woman after another, always in the language of the 1890s (his first important literary experience was his encounter with the poetry of Yeats), represents a kind of refusal to grow up. In the 1930s he always went home to his mother for Christmas.

It is tempting to link all this—though Foreman has the good taste not to do so—with the impractical side of Bax's nature, and in particular with his failure to promote his works once they were finished, a failure which contrasts

alarmingly with the phenomenal energy he devoted to producing them in the first place. (Many of them have still not been performed.) Foreman puts some of Bax's failures down to "sheer bad luck", and it is true that there are examples of this, as when a fire destroyed his publisher's offices, putting most of his works out of print at one blow. But one cannot help feeling that Bax himself was the cause of most of his "bad luck", losing interest in his works as soon as they were completed. "Bad luck" in this context usually means poor promotion.

As for the music, Foreman makes it clear that he is not primarily concerned with analysis. His descriptions of the music are simple but perfectly adequate for a book of this kind; he is particularly good at teasing out programmatic implications, as in his section on the Fourth Symphony. One could perhaps wish for just a little more on structure: the programmatic implications have a decided influence on the form, making it seem episodic and (unusually for the period) shifting the emphasis from development to statement. Bax's astonishing ear for orchestral texture serves to emphasize this. The opening of his Third Symphony, for example, is unlike anything else in music, presenting a type of atonal harmony which is so strongly characterized, and so closely bound up with its orchestration, that it makes the rest of the movement seem like an anti-climax. These matters are important because they affect critical judgments. Once or twice in the book the judgments sit rather uneasily with the musical description (as in the section on *In the Faery Hills*); perhaps analysis might have made one or the other more convincing. But most of the judgments seem fair. For Foreman, Bax reaches "the peak" with *Winter Legends* and the Sixth Symphony, and I would not wish to

descent from that view.

One other area where we could benefit from more detail is the relation to other artists, notably Yeats. In view of the extravagant praise heaped on Yeats's poetry (saying, for example, that it meant more to him than "all the music of the century"), it would have been interesting to know when they met, what their relationship was and how it was expressed. Bax wrote many poems, but none like Yeats's style, but some work like *The Garden of Pheidippides*, in its way, a homage to Yeats, echoes from it are still seen through Bax's music as late as the Sixth Symphony. When Yeats died, he wrote to his brother, "I feel a poignant loss in that the greatest of all is no more." These feelings are to understand since Yeats is not mentioned in the preceding pages, there could also have been more on Bax's relation to Strauss, Stravinsky, Sibelius, Delius, even Grainger, who are told that Bax once played through an arrangement of Grainger's *Warriors* for two pianos, six hands, but not what he thought of it. He played through the piano-duo version of *The Rite of Spring*, soon after its publication in 1913. Again one must know his reaction: Bax was not to know the only English composer responding to Stravinsky at the time (this was nearly ten years later). He also responded, in *Jeux*, Connections of this sort, if we are to mean anything, are supported by documentary evidence: records of meetings, dates and places. One cannot expect to find all this in a biography, but if it is not in Foreman's book goes a long way towards telling us all we need to know about Bax. I just wish it had gone a little further.

## Orchestrated oppositions

Lionel Pike

CHRISTOPHER BALLANTINE

Twentieth Century Symphony  
223pp. Durham: Dennis Dobson.  
£12.95.  
0 234 72042 5

This book is the first attempt at a survey of the twentieth-century symphony: the author establishes patterns and discovers matters of common concern to composers. Couched in straightforward language, the book is aimed at the general reader, and the composers discussed represent a sensible geographical spread.

Christopher Ballantine provides a thorough background to his discussion in a section entitled "The symphony before Mahler: a brief retrospect", which in fact takes up a third of the book. Ironically, this is the best part, for it contains detailed observations and valuable insights. Naturally, one might disagree with the author over points of interpretation. Perhaps one misses most a discussion of the tensions endemic to symphonic form: the dramatic moment of recapitulation, for example, is an obvious feature that could have been explored with advantage. Professor Ballantine presents a kind of overview, though he might have made more of the trouble that many have with their finales. The idea that symphonic form is an expression of its material is illustrated by several quotations, though not by real analysis.

The remainder of the book suffers in several ways. First, as the author admits, there is no attempt to be comprehensive. Ballantine cannot therefore be blamed for choosing a large number of works and dealing with isolated movements from them as if they were detachable, but this approach has evident drawbacks. If a work is to be considered as a logical whole, some of the misapprehensions might have been avoided. In the summary had had a greater command of Beethoven's Fifth, for example, he is surely to blame for

unconscionable time; but the last date in the bibliography is 1976, and the intervening seventy years have seen the publication of various works that might have led Ballantine to re-evaluate his ideas. In particular, Robert Layton's translation of Tawastjerna's *Sibelius* (Volume 1, 1976), Charles Rosen's seminal study *Sonata Form* (1980) and various recent detailed analyses of the symphonic idea (Beethoven, Bruckner, Sibelius) are not taken into account. Third, many printing errors (and some repetitions) should have been eradicated.

Ballantine insists on "dualism" as a *sine qua non* of the true symphony; by this he understands the opposition of homes or tonalities (emphasis on the latter, as he says, has changed considerably during this century). Works not exhibiting such dualism are therefore not considered. Although Ballantine states that the inclusion or rejection of a work should not be taken as a value judgment, one cannot help but wonder whether other types of symphony ought to have been considered. He declines, for instance, to discuss Rubbra's Fifth Symphony because "it is a work of pure contrapuntal monism" and therefore does not come into his selected field of study; yet the remarks he makes about Roy Harris could apply equally well to Rubbra's Fifth. The author's view is that, though contrapuntal forms might constitute part of a symphony, a completely polyphonic work is necessarily monistic. Such a view seems inadequate on two counts. First, counterpoint is not invariably monistic, and there is no reason why symphonic composers who happen to think contrapuntally should not build dualism into their music. Indeed, Ballantine seems at times to suggest this, especially when he seeks to answer his own question, "What if a contrapuntal should so far protest its individuality that it comes into conflict with its context?" It would seem a difficult task to find a twentieth-century symphony where all the contrapuntal lines are similar throughout.

Second, Ballantine's view of dualism is too restricted; and rhythm is a vital area—in, for example, Sibelius's Fifth

Symphony and Robert Simpson's *First*—that is virtually ignored. One may say the same about texture, which is not given any detailed treatment. Pessacaglia and ostinato, we are told, are monistic; yet dualistic textures surely exist between figures and an ongoing nature of variations, which might be said to be a dualistic texture. Such dualism is surely audible, though the balance and tone, lures discovered by the author, are close and fascinating analysis of Webern's Opus 21.

What, then, we may ask, is a symphony? It is well known that one of the greatest symphonists of the century disagreed about this: yet Ballantine's view is quoted in the book. "The large-scale integration of contrasts" does duty splendidly, but would suggest that logical progression, ideas, with exploration of a problem, terms as complete as possible, must be taken into account. It is hard to see how this can be done while detached movements, as Ballantine often does. Moreover, he states that "Borodin's First Symphony has like monistic form but ends by rejecting the illusion of duality as a false and shown really to be one and the same implies that thematic derivation and organic growth preclude dualism." Beethoven's Fourth Symphony demonstrates the fallacy of the author's view. Ballantine is nearer to the truth when he states, "Each harmonic movement forward brings with it a certain imbalance so that it stands in need of reintegration." Here we are close to the heart of the matter.

Findings by Leonard Bernstein (376pp. Macdonald, £12.95, 0 2592 8) is a profusely illustrated compilation of Bernstein's writings ranging through his juvenile compositions, concert reviews, a net "On Acquiring Knowledge" and his Harvard Bachelor's Thesis on "Absorption of Race Elements in American Music". "Powerful" Philharmonic, and the subsequent decade, 1969 to 1980: To this generous self-portrait is added a brief list of his musical compositions.

## Servants of empire

Alan Ross

CHARLES ALLEN (Editor)

Tales from the South China Seas: Images of the British in South-East Asia in the Twentieth Century  
240pp. André Deutsch/BBC. £10.95.  
0 233 97504 7 (André Deutsch)  
0 563 20032 4 (BBC)

*Tales from the South China Seas* completes the "Imperial" trilogy which began with *Plain Tales from the Raj* and continued with *Tales from the Dark Continent*. Broadcast on BBC 4 as "oral history documentaries", the formula in each case remains the same. Under Charles Allen's patient and gentle guidance a number of former servants of empire and their "mens" offer glimpses of a more innocent and simpler past; in the process of this a colonial mosaic is achieved that sets the popular and fictional image of life "out East" or in the bush in a more austere context.

Allen is the most sympathetic and discreet of editors, unobtrusively making an informative collage out of what could have been simply cocktail-party reminiscences or disjointed shop talk. As it is, neither gets out of hand. The disadvantages of this method, the absence of identifiable voices, are obvious enough. In addition, the multiple form of narration leads to a constant switching of interest and to fragmentation. The background fills up nicely with detail but there is no foreground. The result is the equivalent of a film dealing entirely in crowd scenes, the epic novel without a hero.

They are, however, crowd scenes admirably managed. Kipling and Edgar Wallace have been exchanged in this final volume for Conrad, Maugham and Faulconer. Indian Civil Servants, soldiers, and District Officers in Africa are replaced by rubber-planters, tin-miners, steamer captains and police-officers. The landscape is altogether tussler and more tropical. Instead of the elitist society, the plains and large cities of British India, there are isolated bungalows in lonely plantations, small sea-ports and romantic islands. Allen's characters lived out their lives in such places as the Malay States, the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Penang, Malacca, Borneo and Sarawak. They went out, for the most part, shortly

after the 1914-18 war and their careers were ended by the fall of Singapore.

It was a more free and easy world than that inhabited by their counterparts in India and one more or less immune from politics. As Allen accurately phrases it, the central theme is no longer that of one supremely successful (in colonial terms) racial minority imposing itself upon a rather unsuccessful (again, speaking in colonial terms) majority—as in Africa and India—but of several races drawn to the same watery crossroads principally by the lure of trade, competing as rivals but co-existing more or less as equals. The central image is now a shifting one: of sea panoramas and archipelagos and casuarina-fringed sands backed by impenetrable rain forest.

It seems in general to have been a fairly happy and rewarding time for most of the planters and civil servants who spent their lives on the shores of the South China Sea. By the time the contributors to this book departed from the scene warring medieval states had been transformed into peaceful democracies and, as Sjovald Cunningham-Brown remarks in his introduction, "such things cannot be achieved by domination, but only by the closest and most friendly of working relationships".

Perhaps the most striking difference between India and South-East Asia was that "whereas in India the *bax-wallahs* took second place to the Indian Civil Service, in Malaysia the heads of commerce were really the heads of the community".

In many respects, allowing for the differences in landscape and climate, life up-country in Malaysia nevertheless proceeded in much the same fashion as it did up-country in India. Riding, tennis, bridge, shooting, swimming, excursions into the jungle, but mostly hard work, and at the end of the day, drinking. As Henri Faulconer wrote in *His Soul of Malaya*: "The boy never stopped pouring out whisky; bottles of soda-water opened with a rhythmic hiss like ripples in the sand. The talk was, of course, of rubber. John Baxter, a planter in the North Borneo jungle, observed: 'without drink it would have been difficult to carry on.' I don't think that I could have stuck life without it."

These images of tropical life suggest a society as much suited to loners,

eccentrics and autocrats, as to those who played games, fitted in, and generally made the right social noises. Such a figure as Captain Berkeley, the "uncrowned King of Upper Perak", unusual though he was, occasions no great surprise. It was Berkeley who said to his successor, "Here we dispense justice not law." Once, just about to embark on an elephant-ride, Berkeley was chased after by his clerk with the news that he had twenty-five cases in court. On being assured that the offences were minor and that all pleaded guilty, Berkeley authorized that odd numbers should be discharged and even numbers fined five dollars. On another occasion, when there was a dispute over a boundary, Berkeley formed the two sides into teams, held a tug-of-war contest with rotan creepers, and awarded the land to the winning team. He also built himself a double-barrelled laboratory, so that he could join his generally reluctant guests after breakfast.

These stories have a sad ending, up to a point; but though war killed off many, some who survived went back. Like, for example, Cunningham-Brown, now back in Penang and in the spice business.

It is one of those old perfumed trades where one has to have a bath to get the smell of cloves off one in the evening. And it often makes me laugh when I'm doing this job to think that this is where we came in, doing their job in 1866 on the territory of Ben Coolen in Sumatra, which was our very first possession in South-East Asia—a young man in the East India Company collecting the cloves as I am... that is an additional enchantment to a life that I find perfectly satisfying.

Robert Nicholl, working now for the Sultan of Brunei, makes much the same point: "It's surprising how gratifying it is to come across boys whom one first saw as urchins puffing hard at their cheroots and knocking back glasses of *borak*, and then taught in one's sixth form. Now they are very important people either in government or in commerce and so one feels that all those years in Sarawak were not only happy but fruitful. They were not wasted years."

To have spent thirty years, in such fabulous country, returning in the tropical dusk to *phis*, *stengals* and ginslings, and to end up with a sense of accomplishment, seems certainly to have been a life worth living.

## Whimsically busy

Christopher Reid

MICHAEL ONDAATJE

Running in the Family  
207pp. Gollancz. £7.95.  
0 575 03289 8

"What began it all was the bright bone of a dream I could hardly hold on to," Michael Ondaatje is a poet with a high reputation in Canada, where he now lives, but he does himself a disservice by opening the first chapter of his book of memoirs with a sentence as droppable as the one quoted here. For all its occasional portentousness, however ("Asia. The name was a gasp from a dying mouth"), *Running in the Family* turns out to be an intelligent and responsible piece of work, full of good stories and colourful evocations of a world that will be foreign to most of its readers.

The book conflates descriptions of two separate visits to Sri Lanka, where Ondaatje was born and lived for the early part of his childhood. Significantly, the country is always referred to as "Ceylon" in his text, for this is very much an exploration of times past, a way of life that has all but irrevocably vanished. The Ondaatjes, and the other wealthy families to whom they were connected by marriage, were of an agreeable racial mixture: "Everyone was vaguely related and had Sinhalese, Tamil, Dutch, British and Burgher blood in them going back many generations." They formed a social group quite distinct from that of the European and English colonists, who were regarded as "transients, snobs and racists".

By quizzing surviving relatives and friends, Ondaatje has created a picture of the life and times of his parents' and grandparents' generations that is necessarily impressionistic, but nonetheless telling. He is particularly good on the 1920s, the decade summed up by his maternal grandmother, Laila, as "so whimsical, so busy... that we were always tired". The hectic partying, drinking, gambling, and adulterating described here might have been characteristic of a fast set in any part of the world, but detailed annotations of the people involved and of their exotic setting give Ondaatje's account a special poignancy.

Visiting the club at Nuwara Eliya "in buggies pulled by bulls", gate-crashing ships in harbour in order to get at the

rusty-free booze, learning to tango on the rubber estate at Gasmawwa, they lived at a self-destructive pace and achieved little of consequence, but one is glad to have their exploits recorded. Francis de Saram, who would put his teeth in his back pocket before fighting, the aunt who invented "betting on which crow would leave a wall first" (a pastime so popular that the government considered putting a bounty on crows!) and Sammy Diaz Bandaranaike, who waged war on the author's father through the pages of rest-house visitors' books, are memorably recalled.

All this, however, is simply to set the scene for the book's two major portraits, those of Laila and of Mervyn Ondaatje, the author's father. The former was a kindly and impulsive woman, as "whimsical" as the decade she so aptly described. Anecdotes about her are plentiful. She was the first woman in Ceylon to have a breast removed surgically and the rubber bottle that replaced it was a constant bother to her and an embarrassment to others. She exercised a considerable fascination on children, but her generosity, here as elsewhere, was tempered by a "noli me tangere" aloofness. She drank heavily and died by drowning.

Drink figures, too, as the motif of Mervyn Ondaatje's life. He was a spectacular scapegrace, given money by his parents to pay for an English education, spent two and a half years living as a civilian in Cambridge, enjoying himself lavishly in the company of students, until he was eventually found out and obliged to return home. Bouts of drinking at regular intervals helped to ruin his first marriage and destroy his prosperity, making him a danger to his children when driving and a menace to the entire railway system of Ceylon, to which he was mysteriously attracted during alcoholic episodes. The record is presented factually and we are left to make what we can of this man, who inspired both terror and fondness.

It is only when the author's "poetic" impulses begin to assert themselves that the reader is liable to quibble. Those fictionalized passages that are meant to convey Laila's drowning and Mervyn's moods of introspectiveness are not successful. There is, however, much that is uniquely enjoyable and moving in this book, and when Ondaatje allows events to speak for themselves he achieves true eloquence.

## HMSO BOOKS SUMMER AND AUTUMN 1983

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As much as singing swimming is essentially beyond me. My torso doesn't turn sideways in sync with my breath. My vestigial legs in tow, I paddle forward, slow as a disabled steamboat, slow as the clock on the swimming pool wall. A will tow-ing a whale. Ten laps and I'm beyond caring what my laboring breath sounds like. I take my turn within the turning wheel of swimmer allow as myself. I heard a breath, submerge, and splash my arms, swimming towards that fabled flash beyond conscious grasp, towards an order as tower-ingly integral as Turner's seas as they roll beyond their blue horizons, slow metadrops of colour swimming in the sea.

The measured burning of the breath as it fights the flesh's insatiable craving for motion. The swimming becomes a single, smooth turn, a revolving door, a ball in a bowl, motion and no ball. It is that beyond what I dare hope. And beyond that, is there a higher order, a breath of light, a light so slow to dawn, a gift so reluctant to bestow itself, I can't imagine it—and so return to my original idea of swimming?

Swimming as hope, a path beyond past indecisions, as turn-on. Each breath a lurch towards that goal. But oh how slow

Tom Disch







# Taking to the streets

Betty Wood

## RUTH ROSEN

*The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918*  
245pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £14.75.  
0801826640

Of the many themes and problems pertaining to the history of American women that have attracted scholarly attention in recent years, none is more emotive, or has been so partially researched, as prostitution. On both counts Ruth Rosen's sober, and richly documented, study is to be warmly welcomed. This sophisticated analysis may not put an end to the disagreement between feminists as to whether prostitution is "the quintessential exploitation of women in a patriarchal society" or, conversely, "an occupation which frees women from family oppression or economic subservience" but it must surely give the members of both camps considerable food for thought.

Rosen believes, and rightly, that neither of these perspectives satisfactorily explains what in fact was an immensely complicated aspect of the social, economic and cultural life of industrial America. Her concern is to produce a fully-rounded account of urban prostitution during the Progressive Era and to this end she focuses her attention on two hitherto neglected themes: contemporary critiques of prostitution and the perceptions of those women who, for whatever reason, plied that particular trade. But her first, and arguably most difficult, task is to plot the growth of urban prostitution.

The fact that prostitutes were seldom identified as such in governmental or other official records - in itself a revealing insight into contemporary attitudes - makes it virtually impossible to determine how

many women, in which localities, were engaged in prostitution at any one time. But although unsatisfactory, the available evidence indicates that prostitution increased quite dramatically during the course of the nineteenth century and, as Rosen suggests, probably reached its peak between 1850 and 1900.

As in Britain and Europe, its growth was linked directly to the economic and social changes wrought by the twin processes of urbanization and industrialization. The rapid industrial growth of the post-Civil War years had profound consequences for both the structure of, and the value system which underpinned, the American family. In the present context, however, the most significant of these consequences, not least for those who occupied the bottom rungs of the socio-economic ladder, was a fundamental re-shaping of the traditional, family-based economic role of women. With the growth of industrialization, increasing numbers of lower-class women were forced out of what Rosen regards as the protective, rather than the oppressive, sphere of the family into an urban labour market where they were confronted by the prospect of ruthless economic and sexual exploitation. For many of these women prostitution was, to use Rosen's terminology, one of the few viable "survival strategies".

Taking her cue as much from the "new Social History" as from the recent flurry of interest in the history of women, Rosen devotes much of her book to an absorbing discussion of a question previously ignored or regarded as impossible to answer: how did prostitutes themselves perceive their situation?

Many of the standard texts on the social history of nineteenth-century America, or those that both to mention prostitution at all, give the impression that, if not exactly invisible,

prostitutes were inarticulate, that their motives and perceptions, the world which they inhabited, can be recreated only through the eyes of others and, more often than not, through those of their sternest critics or would-be saviours. But as Rosen and Sue Davidson have already demonstrated in their *Maimie Papers* (1977), nothing could be further from the truth.

Some prostitutes left letters and memoirs from which it is possible to reconstruct their world from their own standpoint; many others supplied information to those middle-class reformers who periodically "investigated" prostitution and, during the Progressive Era, to the recently established municipal vice commissions. But as Rosen admits, the authenticity and objectivity of these data are open to precisely the same type of criticism as that sometimes levelled against the "ex-slave narratives" of the 1930s. However, she is well aware of the methodological problems they pose and employs them most judiciously. Moreover, and quite refreshingly, she resists the temptation to use them as the basis of an account which depicts, and seeks to explain, urban prostitution in sets of graphs and statistical correlations.

What emerges from Rosen's thoughtful and eminently readable analysis is a fascinating picture of the previously unexplored subculture of urban prostitution. Perhaps her most significant, and potentially most provocative, finding is that many prostitutes - she suspects the majority - did not see themselves as helpless or hapless victims in need of rescue. They often claimed that prostitution was an "easier" way of life than the alternatives of factory employment or domestic drudgery. In no sense did they regard themselves as a "Lost Sisterhood", as women who had been coerced or hoodwinked into prostitution and who therefore posed a potential threat to the moral and social fabric of

American life. Words such as "immoral", "guilt", and "taint" seem not to have featured prominently in their vocabulary. But as Rosen points out in what comprises her second main theme, this self-perception was at odds with, and by the turn of the nineteenth-century diametrically opposed to, the view of prostitution and prostitutes held by most reformers.

Whereas previous historians have usually been content simply to identify prostitution as just one of the social problems which so troubled nineteenth-century American reformers, Rosen argues that attitudes towards prostitution changed dramatically, and with dire consequences, during the Progressive Era. Now, for the first time, reformers became determined to eradicate it.

Previous reformers, beginning with the zealots of the second Great Awakening, had argued on moral and religious grounds that prostitution posed a threat to American manners and morals. Down to the late nineteenth century they employed various devices, including the periodic harassment of prostitutes, and at least one occasion publication of the names of men who visited New York brothels, in an attempt to limit and control prostitution. But although they held it to be morally and socially undesirable, privately they recognized that prostitution was "necessary" and that the best they could hope to achieve was the removal of the "oldest profession" from the sight, and temptation, of the middle-class.

Progressive reformers, on the other hand, identified prostitution not as a "necessary evil" but as a "Social Evil" which, as Rosen puts it, "symbolized the shaky state of the nation's soul". Greatly alarmed by the growth of urban prostitution, they sought not regulation but abolition. As with the rest of their social programme, this was seen as a task demanding the active

involvement of government. Between 1900 and 1918 municipal governments, especially were persuaded to take what amounted to a nationwide crusade against prostitution. But as Rosen convincingly argues, it was a crusade which, like many other Progressive campaigns, backfired and produced entirely opposite results to that intended.

Not least because of the closing down of the previously tolerated light districts and the passage of laws which made it a criminal offence, prostitution was driven "underground" where it became more closely associated with liquor, drugs, theft and "vice". Ironically, by the time they proposed, and the attitudes fostered, in the longer term Progressives succeeded only in creating a different, but equally insidious, set of social "problems".

Rosen has broken entirely new ground in what will surely remain a definitive study of urban prostitution in America for many years to come. I doubt some will take issue with her contention that although "dangerous and degrading" to women, prostitution "has enabled thousands of women to escape even worse danger and deprivation". Yet this is a perfectly tenable argument and one which, supported by Rosen's analysis, is greatly to her credit that she makes no attempt to squeeze the matter into a pre-determined or rigid ideological mould. Hers is an approach which explains, and puts into perspective, the experience of many women in an urbanizing industrializing United States. In her hands these women, despised and vilified by their contemporaries, and yet ignored by scholars, have at last their historian, and a most perceptive one at that.

# Once more unto the text

Nigel Alexander on the first three volumes of the Oxford Shakespeare

## H. J. OLIVER (Editor)

*The Taming of the Shrew*  
248pp. 0 19 812907 6

## GARY TAYLOR (Editor)

*Henry V*  
330pp. 0 19 812912 2

## KENNETH MUIR (Editor)

*Troilus and Cressida*  
205pp. 0 19 812903 3  
Oxford University Press, £9.50 each.

A recent television biography of Lord Olivier contained some instructive comment on his film of *Hamlet*. The narrative voice-over expressed the opinion that the director had chosen to make it in black and white because he "saw the play as an etching rather than a painting". Olivier shook his head over such an old tale: the truth was that he was having a financial dispute with Technicolor at the time.

The commercial constraints surrounding dramatic productions have not much changed since William Shakespeare's day. Hemingway and Henry Cavendish were professional actors in a difficult market. Hemingway and Cavendish, Shakespeare's fellow actors and friends, collected his plays after his death and, in association with a number of publishers including William and Isaac Jaggard, printed them in 1623 in the volume called *Mr William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*. Their book is our sole authority for sixteen plays, including *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*. We owe them more than the praise normally paid to dead friends or famous men.

Obviously they, and the publishers, felt that the book would sell. This mixture of reverence for Shakespeare's works with an acute appreciation of their continuing commercial possibilities is still the driving force behind the endless succession of modern editions - *The Arden*, *The New Arden*, *The Cambridge*, *The New Cambridge* with an even newer *Cambridge* now in preparation. *The Kluge*, *The Penguin*, *The Pelican*, *The New Penguin*, *The Signet*, *The Riverside*, and now the first three volumes of the *Oxford Shakespeare*. It has been a long time in gestation. R. B. McKerrow's *Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare* was published in 1939. The project lapsed for a time at his death, was then continued under the guidance of a succession of distinguished scholars, but the problem proved too formidable for individual effort. In 1978 the Oxford University Press established a Shakespeare Department and appointed Stanley Wells as its head and General Editor of a series of projected Oxford editions.

In 1979 Dr Wells published a preliminary study called *Modernizing Shakespeare's Spelling*. There he pointed out that the French town of Marseilles requires to be pronounced as three syllables in *The Taming of the Shrew* 2.1.367 and in *All's Well That Ends Well* 4.4.9-10. It also occurs in *All's Well* in a prose passage where syllabic pronunciation may be less certain. The 1623 Folio spells it as "Marcellus" in *The Shrew* and the prose passage in *All's Well*. It varies it to "Marcellus" in *All's Well* - a version and not another on stage. Or, of course, he may not find himself on stage at all. Most people who have seen *Henry V* will remember the boastful behaviour of the Dauphin on the night before Agincourt. They will look for pronunciation in a modern performer? H. J. Oliver, editing *The Taming of the Shrew*, spells it "Marcellus" and has a footnote. Wells thought the spelling "Marcellus" most acceptable but commented:

If no solution seems wholly satisfactory, one can only point to what is the kind of triviality over which editors agonize; changing their minds several times a day, rising from their beds to change it again, and telegraphing yet another variation to their sub-editors even after they have returned their final proofs. It is such anxieties, more perhaps even than major textual choices, that drive an editor to a state of mind which is not only a state of mind but a state of mind.

of impotent neurosis, or drink, or an early grave. The tossing of a coin at an early stage after all the pros and cons have been weighed, with a firm resolution to abide by its decision, may avert these calamities.

Only those who have never known the laborious delights of editing will scorn such grave anxieties or believe that Wells delivers more or less than truth. But is neurotic coin-tossing really necessary? Do we need new and yet newer editions? Should we not simply retire with our *Knights' Cabinet Shakespeare* and study the plays?

The question is partly answered by these new volumes. They are easy to handle, beautifully printed, clear to read and an unacknowledged genius has solved the problem of printing footnotes so that they can be understood and read with pleasure. Any student of Shakespeare is bound to be grateful to those who have so simplified his task. The first three volumes are already sufficient evidence that the series is a triumph of editorial planning. Wells was clearly right to make his first priority a rigorous attempt to modernize the spelling. Of course there are difficulties - but they have been consciously faced and some attempt made to provide consistent answers. One of the results has been a close attention to Shakespeare's language, which is reflected in the quality of the footnotes. It also enforces an essential distinction "between actual emendations (departures from what the documents testify that Shakespeare wrote) and mere modernizations (interpretations of what Shakespeare meant by what the documents testify that he wrote)".

This, as Gary Taylor points out in his introduction to *Henry V*, becomes particularly important when the language employed is not English but French. Also by accident or design, the first three plays all present particularly difficult textual problems and the attentive reader of the introductions and commentary can gain an education in modern editorial procedures which it seems reasonable to assume will be applied throughout the series. The advantage of these procedures is not simply a better text but a new conception of Shakespeare.

This is a major achievement of twentieth-century scholarship. A continuous editorial decision to have been taken to synthesize the labours of many scholars, to extend their results wherever possible and then apply these principles consistently to the production of a new edition. The list of editors and advisers contains many distinguished names and all have no doubt made their contribution, but the controlling concept must surely be directly attributed to the wisdom and imagination of the General Editor. The volumes under review reveal the extreme difficulty of his task.

Anyone who sets out to print the plays of Shakespeare is automatically conscripted into exercising an editorial function. Horatio asks his comrades to watch the morn walk "o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill" - or does he say "Eastern"? Ophelia compares Hamlet's mind to sweet bells jangled - but are they "out of time and tune" or "out of tune and time"? Does Othello compare himself to the "base Indian" who threw a pearl away - or was it a Judaea? At the very least it has to matter to an actor who has to say one version and not another on stage. Or, of course, he may not find himself on stage at all. Most people who have seen *Henry V* will remember the boastful behaviour of the Dauphin on the night before Agincourt. They will look for pronunciation in a modern performer? H. J. Oliver, editing *The Taming of the Shrew*, spells it "Marcellus" and has a footnote. Wells thought the spelling "Marcellus" most acceptable but commented:

If no solution seems wholly satisfactory, one can only point to what is the kind of triviality over which editors agonize; changing their minds several times a day, rising from their beds to change it again, and telegraphing yet another variation to their sub-editors even after they have returned their final proofs. It is such anxieties, more perhaps even than major textual choices, that drive an editor to a state of mind which is not only a state of mind but a state of mind.

Readers' Hemingway and Cavendish gave a modest account of their achievement: it had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished, that the author himself had lived to have set forth and overseen his own writings. But since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envy his friends the office of their care and pain to have collected and published them - and so to have published them that as where before you were abused with divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious imposters that exposed them, even those are now offered to your view cured and perfect of their limbs, and all the rest absolute in their numbers as he conceived them.

Twenty of Shakespeare's plays had already appeared in print. Some plays - *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* are examples - were printed more than once. These versions differ from each other and from the text of 1623 - sometimes in radical fashion. In *Troilus and Cressida* Kenneth Muir points out that there are more than 1,000 differences between the Quarto text of 1609 and the Folio. Most concern spelling or punctuation but there are about 500 substantive differences and in many cases Professor Muir prefers the reading of the Quarto. The difficulty lies in the language. It looks as if Hemingway and Cavendish are condemning all the early texts. Consequently when it appears that some Quartos preserve good texts - as for example the second Quarto of *Hamlet* printed in 1604-5 - then the Folio text itself obviously falls under suspicion. Yet modern criticism does distinguish three kinds of text which do correspond exactly to the words used in the Quarto: "stolen", "surreptitious" and "injurious imposters". There are good texts of Shakespeare which get printed and which Hemingway and Cavendish might rightly have regarded as stolen, surreptitious, or injurious imposters. They are good texts of Shakespeare which get printed and which Hemingway and Cavendish might rightly have regarded as stolen, surreptitious, or injurious imposters. They are good texts of Shakespeare which get printed and which Hemingway and Cavendish might rightly have regarded as stolen, surreptitious, or injurious imposters.

It is this last argument which is expanded, developed, and turned into virtual certainty by H. J. Oliver in this new Oxford edition of *The Taming of the Shrew*. It may seem a minor matter whether these plays were put together by actors from the work of an already popular and successful dramatist or whether they were plays already in existence which Shakespeare reworked. It is, however, of great importance since it allows us to use the firm factual foundation provided by modern scholarship to change absurd attitudes about Shakespeare which have been held for centuries. The *Taming of the Shrew* is a central text in the understanding of Shakespeare's art.

The play called *A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called The taming of a Shrew* was published in 1594. The similarity between the titles makes distinction difficult for the reader but there seems no greater aid to clarity than the modern scholarly convention of referring to the quarto of 1594 as *A Shrew* and the Folio text of 1623 as *The Shrew*. As Oliver says, it now seems "inevitable that for hundreds of years *A Shrew* being the first of two versions of the story to be published, and being clearly inferior, should have been assumed to have been the first composed". Oliver's method is basically that followed by Hickson, Duthie and other scholars. He chooses a number of parallel passages in both texts and shows that what appears in the Quarto only makes sense in the light of the Folio text. Ferando in *A Shrew* and Petruchio in *The Shrew* both have a soliloquy in which they explain their method of "taming" to the audience. Ferando says:

This humour must I hold me to awhile, To bridle and hold back my headstrong will, With curbs of hunger, ease, and want of sleep. Nor sleep nor meat shall she enjoy tonight. I'll mew her up as men do mew their hawks, And make her gently come unto the lure. Were she as stubborn as a full strength As were the Thracian horse Alcides tamed, That King Egeus fed with flesh of men, Yet would I pull her down and make her come. As hungry hawks do fly unto their lure.

Petruchio also compares his conduct to the training of a hawk - keeping it hungry until it learns to come back to the lure, used for recovery of the bird after free flight. It is also a practice in falconry to keep birds that show a tendency to "flap about" awake until they calm down and are docile. It is arguable whether this is a proper way to treat a wife but it does seem to be effective with birds.

The author of the passage in *A Shrew* seems to misunderstand the hawking imagery. Hawks are mewed up in the moulting season. It has nothing specific to do with training them. He also mixes the metaphor with the much more commonplace one of women as horses to be bridled and ridden. The mauling, Thracian horses, tamed by Hercules, are the horses borrowed from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and made into rather less than mighty lines.

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# Caring for the bodies

Thomas McKeown

## ANTHONY WOHL

*Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain*  
440pp. Dent. £17.50.  
0 460 04232 1

The history of public health in Victorian Britain could hardly be described, in the words of the schoolboy's essay, as "virgin field, pregnant with opportunity" so it is surprising that Anthony Wohl should introduce his book with the assertion that "countless articles and books have been written on the Victorian mind but relatively few on the Victorian body". There is a large literature - narrative,

descriptive, and analytical - concerned with health and disease in the nineteenth century, and much of it is cited in the extensive bibliography appended to *Endangered Lives*. Indeed it is the merit of the book that although it has no new evidence or novel conclusions it brings together a large quantity of material, some of which hitherto has not been readily available.

The nineteenth century is arguably the most significant period in medical history. It was the time when industrialization transformed conditions of life, with profound consequences for health and population growth; when clinical medicine first became really effective; when it was accepted, after a long debate, that ill-health was largely due to environmental conditions which could be controlled; and when the most

important measures ever taken to protect health - improvements in food and hygiene and limitation of numbers - were introduced. Moreover, there are good reasons for Wohl's decision to focus attention on the period of Victorian Britain. She came to the throne just before births, deaths and cause of death were first registered nationally (in 1858), so from that time it is possible to analyse health problems in evidence from parish registers. She died soon after the end of the century, when the predominant causes of death were changing from the infectious to the non-communicable diseases (heart disease, cancer, accidents and the like). A discussion of public health in the Victorian period is therefore essentially an assessment of the immediate effects of industrialization on health, and it can be made, for the first time in history, on the basis of reasonably reliable evidence.

Professor Wohl considers in turn most of the traditional themes which have been the concern of public health workers: infant mortality; infectious diseases; sewage and refuse disposal; food and drink; and pollution; and the approach is essentially descriptive. The interesting things to say about the history for sanitary reform and the limitations which became increasingly apparent in the last years of the century - for the Victorians, public health, like so many other social reforms, and endeavoured to "take the form of a moral crusade". The Victorians, epidemics were not the scourges sent by God to punish man for his sins, but were the consequences of man's sinful neglect of God's earth and of his inclination to care for the sick and weak. There could be no moral, religious or intellectual improvement without physical improvement.

The early reformers did indeed believe that good health could be achieved by specific hygienic measures, but later there were doubts. The sale of advances in other, particularly infant mortality, did not fall

before 1900, and a high proportion of volunteers for military service in the Boer War were judged unfit. Remarkably, some people attributed such findings to advances in health food previously made, and Wohl quotes a medical observer, by no means atypical, who argued that "I do not see how we can shrink the fact that preventive medicine and civilisation between them have already deteriorated in a marked degree the healthy vigour of our race... Preventive medicine is trying a unique experiment, and the effect is already discernible - race-decay". But a reason for more enduring concern was recognition that the causes of ill-health were rooted in poverty, whose elimination was beyond the aims of most sanitary reformers. Simon, the wisest and most experienced medical observer, concluded that "the masses will scarcely be healthy unless, to their very base, they be at least moderately prosperous." It is a conclusion which has found an echo in recent discussions of the health inequalities which still exist.

Professor Wohl touches at several points on what is perhaps the most important medical issue in the nineteenth century; the reason for the reduction of infectious deaths. His reference to the standard of living and to improvement in nutrition, which I believe was the most important factor, are not altogether consistent. He states that "the assumption that the 'indisputable' rise in the century witnessed must now be modified", and a little later that "over the nation as a whole living standards rose in the second half of the nineteenth century". He recognizes that "the consequences of poverty are most apparent in the diets of the poor", and concludes that "it was not until the last quarter of the century that the working man's diet improved significantly". If this were true we would still be without an explanation of the substantial decline in mortality, which would also have to explain why large numbers of people left Goldsmith's

idyllic village for Engh's industrial town, if not because of the employment they were seeking, but because of the need to escape the squalor and filth of their homes. Indeed Wohl's book is no less about the extent and consequences of poverty in nineteenth-century Britain, and the environmental ills to which a poor birth, provided jobs, higher living standards, employment for the family, and ultimately the export which enabled England to pay for its imported food which was so essential to its health.

With a large subject it is not surprising that there are some errors but a few are more serious. Smallpox was associated with poverty, not with the reduction of mortality in the nineteenth century, and vaccination was probably not the main reason for the decline of the disease. The virulence of scarlet fever was attributable to "the generally low standard of nutrition and hygiene, and the lowered resistance" of the infected. It is an outstanding example of an infectious disease whose fluctuations in virulence appear to be determined by changes in the relation between host and parasite. The questionable that improved standards of personal hygiene contributed substantially, or indeed of any other infection. Contrary to general belief, tuberculosis, unlike measles, is not highly infectious disease, as is evident from the fact that only a small proportion of wives of infected husbands were themselves affected.

*Fenwomen: A Portrait of Victorian English Village* by Mary Chamberlain has recently been reissued by Routledge and Kegan Paul (1980). Paperback, £4.95. 0 7100 9580 8. The book, published originally by Victor Gollancz, is a social and oral history of Fenland, from memory at least, of a hundred and fifty years. In the preface to this new edition Ms Chamberlain says: "I wanted the women's stories to stand as extracts from life histories, which interact with each other and are located within a time and a place".

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